■ World / A8

Kim turns 62 as world awaits nuke solution

■ Entertainment / A24

Arnel's switch breaks up friendship

■ News / A5

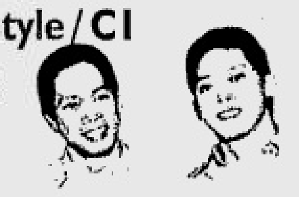
NPA land mine kills nine cops in Masbate

■ Sports / A19

Shaq is NBA's all-star MVP

■ Lifestyle / C1

RP's first Festival of Twins



Malaysia says struggle of MILF rebels futile

KUALA LUMPUR—Malaysia branded as futile the Moro Islamic Liberation Front's struggle to establish a separate Muslim state in Mindanao after Kuala Lumpur on Sunday sought a postponement of exploratory talks between the MILF and the Philippine government.

The two-day talks, which the Philippines had hoped would pave the way for the re-

MALAYSIA/ A4

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Rape of RP maid probed

TAIWANESE vice presidential candidate Elmer Fung is under investigation for allegedly raping his 24-year-old Filipino maid before paying her US$24,150 in hush money and sending her back to the Philippines. ***(See story on 2nd Front Page.)***

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website: www.inq7.net

2 new poll execs want Poe barred

HOMETOWN boy makes good, and San Carlos City in Pangasinan turns out the biggest rally ever for its favorite son shown here against a rising sun.

EDWIN BACASMAS

Move boosts notion GMA appointees helping her

By Philip C. Tubeza

IN A MOVE that could bolster the perception that they were named to the poll body to help President Macapagal-Arroyo win a full six-year term, the two new appointees to the Commission on Elections yesterday asked the Supreme Court to disqualify actor Fernando Poe Jr. from the presidential race on the ground that he was not a natural-born Filipino citizen.

Commissioners Virgilio Garcillano and Manuel Barcelona Jr. joined Commissioner Florentino Tuason in submitting to the high court comments on the disqualification petitions against Poe.

Their comments were separate from that of the Comelec en banc, which urged the Supreme Court to dismiss, "without prejudice to the determination" of Poe's citizenship, the disqualification petitions "for lack of merit."

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Thursday the oral arguments on the disqualification petitions of lawyers Victorino Fornier, Maria Jeanette Tecson, Felix Desiderio and Zoilo Velez.

Opposition Sen. Aquilino Pimentel, a reelectionist under the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino led by Poe, had questioned the appointment of Barcelona and Garcillano because of their close ties to First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo.

Barcelona was reported to have contributed to the campaign kitty of Ms Macapagal when she ran for vice president in 1998, while Garcillano had been accused by Pimentel in the "*dagdag-bawas*" (vote padding and shav-

2 NEW/ A14

ONE FOR ALL: Presidential candidates Raul Roco, Sen. Panfilo Lacson and Eddie Villanueva join forces, if only to prevent cheating by Malacañang, so they vowed before the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines on Monday.

JESS YUSON

I'm a true Filipino, FPJ insists

By Christine O. Avendaño

SAN CARLOS CITY—Exasperated over moves to disqualify him from the presidential race, actor Fernando Poe Jr. told his supporters on Sunday night that he is a true Filipino.

"You know that despite efforts to destroy my name and that of my family, they cannot negate the fact that I'm a son of San Carlos and of Pangasinan and that I'm a true Filipino," Poe said before some 15,000 people at the Virgin Milagrosa University stadium.

It was the biggest gathering of supporters of Poe, son of an American mother and a Filipino father (others claim his father was Spanish), since the campaign began on Feb. 10.

Noting that his father Fernando Poe Sr. was born in San Carlos, Poe said he was here not as a movie actor but someone seeking support for "the biggest role" he would play in his life.

Poe was referring to the black propaganda hurled against him, including accusations that he is an American and not a natural-born Filipino citizen. The Supreme Court has scheduled for Thursday the oral arguments on the disqualification petition filed against Poe

Early in the day, he told reporters he would abide by the Supreme Court ruling on his citizenship, even if the tribunal's de-

I'M A TRUE/ A14

Anybody but Gloria, her 3 rivals agree

By Michael Lim Ubac and Dona Pazzibugan

ANYBODY but Gloria.

Opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson appeared to speak for the other presidential candidates when he told the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines that, if he were not in the running, he would vote for anybody but President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"I will not vote for GMA," said Lacson, eliciting chuckles from reporters covering the forum held at the Mandarin Hotel in Makati City.

The two other presidential candidates who accepted the Focap invitation ducked the question. But former Sen. Raul Roco insisted that Ms Macapagal has shown that she could no longer serve the people because she "is compelled constantly by politics and her motivations."

"The present government must be replaced. We can't afford to have six more years of Gloria," said Roco.

Christian preacher Eddie Villanueva, a former Marxist radical who now heads the Jesus Is Lord Movement, said he would establish "a genuine righteous government that has never been experienced in the history of this country" and deliver Filipinos from immoral and incompetent bureaucrats.

Roco twitted both Ms Macapagal and oppo-

ANYBODY/ A4

ELECTION 2004

GMA: In best position to make changes

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

THOUGH it was declared "governance" day for her, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday made a campaign pitch before a gathering of women leaders in Makati City and later at an anti-drug rally in Quezon City attended by thousands of drivers of public utility vehicles.

At the 38th national conference of the Inner Wheel Clubs of the Philippines held at the Manila Hotel, Ms Macapagal solicited their support for her continued her stay in Malacañang. She told her hosts that it was "not wrong of you to give me an endorsement" because it was the campaign season.

" … I think it is also God-given that I will be able to speak with you during the campaign period so that I can take this opportunity to say and to ask you to tell the many people you influence, in all of the many communities in which you work, that among the candidates, Gloria Arroyo is in the best position to achieve the changes we want," she said.

"Why? Because I have gained the clout and the experience to turn the economy around," she told the gathering of mostly wives of Rotarians and other "empowered women."

In the short time that she was President, Ms Macapagal said she was able to turn the economy around and "stabilize [it from] the mess we inherited."

"I guess the best way, the shortest way to de-

GMA/ A14

RALLYING around their flag, defiant Magdalo leaders of the July Oakwood mutiny appear at a court-martial hearing, which adjourned for the third time as defense lawyers continued to challenge the members of the military tribunal.

ERIK ARAGAS

NBI files sedition charges vs Saycon, Kawal officers

By Leila B. Salaverria and Alcuin Papa

CIVIL society leader and administration critic Pastor "Boy" Saycon and eight others, including five military officers, were charged with inciting to sedition before the Department of Justice yesterday.

The charges filed by the National Bureau of Investigation were based mostly on the affidavits of Baltazar Asadon, the spokesperson of the group Kawal Pilipino, and Captains Marcos Serafica and Mohammad Yusop Hasan. The NBI had asked the justice department to exclude the three from the charges and turn them into state witnesses, said NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco.

Also charged were Boy Montelibano of the Council on Philippine Affairs, Commander Larry Andes and Captains Peter Navarro of the Special Operations Command, Rembert Baylosis of the Philippine Army and Philip Esmeralda of the Headquarters Support Group.

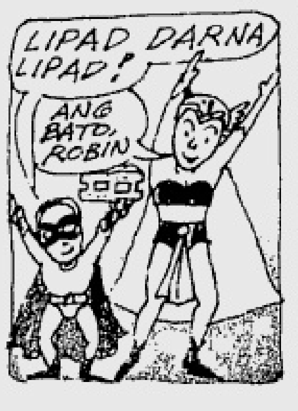
The NBI chief said the charges were filed to send a message—that the rule of law must apply and that "adventurism" must be punished.

"Threats to national security would not be treated with kid gloves. The price is too high," Wycoco said.

But in another more high-profile case, the leaders of last July's Magdalo mutiny accused the Macapagal administration of anti-democratic schemes.

During yesterday's trial of the 268 soldiers facing court-martial in Fort

NBI FILES/ A4



Robin, Darna take up cudgels for opposition

By Carlito Pablo

THE OPPOSITION has a new "Dynamic Duo."

Sen. Loren Legarda is taking over half of the old media tandem of former Senators Blas Ople and Ernesto "Boy" Herrera.

But stepping into the shoes of the recently deceased Ople, who was Batman to Herrera's Robin, Legarda yesterday decided she would rather be known as "Darna," after the Filipino *komiks* super heroine.

"Darna *na lang. Payag*

ROBIN/ A4

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2004
E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

Second FRONT PAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/02/17/04

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Taiwan vice president bet accused of raping RP maid

Report says 'Rose' sent home after payment of $24,150

TAIPEI, Taiwan—Taiwanese prosecutors were investigating allegations that a former lawmaker and vice presidential candidate raped his Filipino maid before paying her hush money and sending her back to the Philippines, officials said on Monday.

The allegations became public over the weekend when an organization that seeks to protect foreign workers' rights accused Elmer Fung of sexually assaulting the 24-year-old maid on Jan. 23 at his home in the capital, Taipei.

Wang You-ling, an official with the Cabinet-level Council of Labor Affairs, confirmed on Monday that the maid — identified only by her first name, Rose — was quickly sent home after Fung paid her 800,000 New Taiwan dollars (US$24,150).

The Shihlin District Court in Taipei will investigate the allegations because sexual assaults cannot be settled out of court under Taiwanese law, prosecutor Wang Jen-kuai told reporters.

"We have statements by both parties recorded by police, and the maid's medical examination report," Wang told reporters.

"Since the victim is not here, it may be a little difficult to handle the case. But if deemed necessary, we will subpoena her," he said.

Fung, who is in Shanghai, said the accusations were false. He said the woman made up the allegations because she was seeking revenge against his wife, who had complained about her work and had reprimanded her.

He said that he paid her but insisted the money was her annual salary and layoff pay.

"She has showed remorse and is willing to withdraw her accusation," Fung told TVBS cable news.

Fung's daughter, Fung Fu-hwa, said she believed her father was innocent because he had spent the whole day with other family members on Jan. 23.

The New Party, a tiny political party, has said it will suspend Fung's membership until he is cleared of the charge. Fung was the fringe party's vice presidential candidate in the 2000 election.

Although he wasn't re-elected in the December 2001 legislative elections, Fung has stayed in the news by serving as an advocate for Taiwanese living in China. He has repeatedly accused the government of being anti-China and ignoring the needs of Taiwanese working on the mainland. Taiwan and China split amid civil war in 1949, and relations are still tense. *AP*

Eddie Villanueva on ballot a stray vote? Yes, say 2 Comelec lawyers

By Martin P. Marfil

IF A voter who's overseas writes "Eddie Villanueva" on the ballot, this would be considered a "stray vote" and will not be counted.

This is according to two Comelec lawyers who recently trained personnel of the Department of Foreign Affairs who will be supervising overseas absentee voting in Philippine consulates.

The overseas voting starts on March 12 for seafarers.

The two lawyers, Ma. Juana Valesa and Juan Corpuz Jr., gave the briefing on Feb. 6 and 7 and told participants that votes cast for the name "Eddie Villanueva" should be interpreted as a combination of the names of two candidates Eddie Gil and Eddie Villanueva.

One of the Comelec lawyers justified their position saying that this was based on Section 44, paragraph F of Comelec Resolution 6466 which states: "When two words are written in the ballot, one of which is the first name of a candidate and the other is a surname of his/her opponent, the vote shall not be counted for either."

For votes to be counted in Villanueva's favor, his supporters must write down "Bro. Eddie," "Bro. Eddie Villanueva" or "Eduardo Villanueva," the Comelec lawyer said.

Villanueva, the evangelist, wrote his name as "Eduardo Villanueva" and nickname as "Bro. Eddie" in his certificate of candidacy (COC).

Bangon Pilipinas yesterday condemned the action of the two Comelec lawyers and asked Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos to relieve them of their duties and charge them administratively.

"The action of these lawyers are highly anomalous and open to the charge of being partisan, malicious (with intent) solely to mislead the public," Bangon Pilipinas, through its lawyer Jordan Pizarras, said yesterday.

Kabayan dared to stand up vs Mindoro murders

Militant groups, military trade charges over brains behind slays

By Volt Contreras, Martin P. Marfil and Marlon Ramos,
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

LEFTIST groups yesterday challenged Vice Presidential candidate Noli de Castro to lead his fellow Mindoreños in calling for an end to the "militarization", of Mindoro island.

De Castro, President Macapagal-Arroyo's running mate in the May 10 polls, owes it to his province-mates to help solve last Friday's killings of Vice Mayor Juvy Magsino of Naujan, Mindoro Oriental, and Bayan Muna party-list group coordinator Leima Fortu, said the fisher folk group Pamalakaya.

Even as a senator, De Castro has long been on "silent mode" over the spate of violence targeting Mindoro-based community leaders and activists critical of the military operations, observed the Pamalakaya.

Magsino, the latest victim, was a lawyer and human rights advocate and the mayoral candidate of the ruling Lakas-CMD for the municipality. She was shot dead with Fortu by two motorbike-riding men several hours after attending a campaign rally of Ms Macapagal, De Castro and the K4 senatorial bets in Calapan City, the provincial capital.

The Commission on Elections chair Benjamin Abalos yesterday declared the town of Naujan not just a "hot spot," but an "area of concern" which means that police forces there would be placed on "heightened alert."

To prevent future killings of candidates, Abalos said politicians who have been receiving threats can request for at least two security officers of their choice as part of their protection.

Appalled with the "executions," Teddy Casiño of Bayan Muna has accused the 204th Infantry Brigade, who are pursuing communist New People's Army guerrillas in Mindoro, of masterminding the twin murders.

Col. Fernando Mesa, chief of the 204th Infantry Battalion, brushed off allegations that he and his troops had a hand in the killing of Magsino and Fortu.

Instead, Mesa pointed a finger at the New People's Army (NPA) and communist leader Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal as masterminding the murders "just like they did with the Operation Missing Link (OPML) and the bloody purges during the 1980s."

"Ka Roger and the NPA have the capability and the tendency to kill even their supporters and use it to propagate lies against the military and gain public support. But I'd like to clear that we are open [to] any investigation," Mesa told the INQUIRER.

Casiño's reaction: "It's a brazen lie. After saying that Magsino and Bayan Muna are supporters of the NPA, he still has the nerve to say that the NPA killed (our members). It's an irresponsible act."

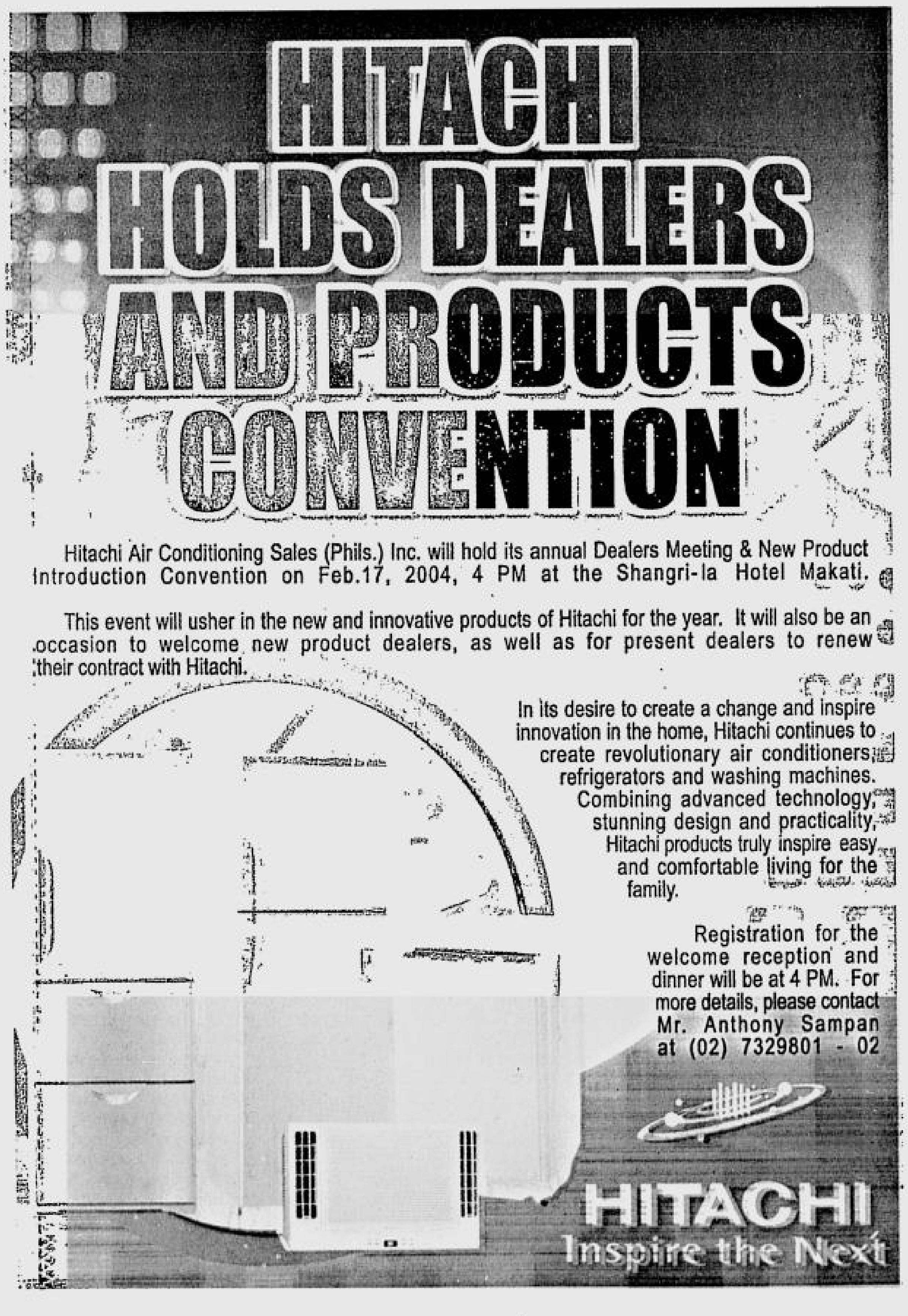
"Mesa's explanations only create more suspicions (that they know something about the killing). His accusations against Ka Roger are unthinkable and illogical," he said.

Also yesterday, The Communist Party of the Philippines strongly condemned the killings and has vowed to "mete out justice against the perpetrators."

Rosal, CPP spokesman, said in a statement that Magsino was particularly targeted for elimination as she was becoming a sure winner in the Naujan mayoral race. Magsino was popular and well-loved by the townspeople for her genuine pro-people and progressive stance, he said.

Rosal called Mindoro "a calamity area with respect to human rights." He urged the acceleration of the formation of the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) to oversee their implementation of the NDF-GRP human rights agreement.

He said that the JMC should immediately look into the murder of Magsino and Fortu as one of its first and urgent cases. *Clarice Colting, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*



HITACHI HOLDS DEALERS AND PRODUCTS CONVENTION

Hitachi Air Conditioning Sales (Phils.) Inc. will hold its annual Dealers Meeting & New Product Introduction Convention on Feb.17, 2004, 4 PM at the Shangri-la Hotel Makati.

This event will usher in the new and innovative products of Hitachi for the year. It will also be an occasion to welcome new product dealers, as well as for present dealers to renew their contract with Hitachi.

In its desire to create a change and inspire innovation in the home, Hitachi continues to create revolutionary air conditioners, refrigerators and washing machines. Combining advanced technology, stunning design and practicality, Hitachi products truly inspire easy and comfortable living for the family.

Registration for the welcome reception and dinner will be at 4 PM. For more details, please contact Mr. Anthony Sampan at (02) 7329801 - 02

HITACHI
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SHOW BIZ IN FPJ RALLIES

For love of 'Da King,' not money, says Sotto

By Christine O. Avendaño

SAN CARLOS CITY, Pangasinan—For love, not money.

Unlike the show biz personalities in the campaigns of the other presidential bets, those appearing in the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino rallies are there *gratis at amore*, offering their services to Fernando Poe Jr. for free and out of love.

"*Kusang loob silang pumunta dito; hindi po sila binabayaran* (They came on their own; they are not being paid)," said Sen. Vicente Sotto III, Poe's personal campaign manager, to the large crowd that gathered here for the KNP's biggest rally to date last Sunday night.

Sotto, who is himself from show biz, told the INQUIRER the only talent fees paid by the KNP are the royalties for the song "Bagong Umagang Parating" by Bayang Barrios.

The song opened the KNP's proclamation rally-cum-variety show on Feb. 10 at the Cuneta Astrodome in Pasay City.

The song also opened the rally at the Virgen Milagrosa University stadium in this city on Sunday.

It was a powerhouse cast of entertainers that showed up to endorse Poe and the other KNP candidates and to regale the crowd.

Rico Puno sang his signature songs to loud cheers. Actors Christopher de Leon and Edgar Mortiz did their version of the Village People song "YMCA," replacing the letters with "FPJ."

Comics Vic Sotto and Joey de Leon sang Florante's "Ako'y Isang Pinoy," changing it to "Siya'y Isang Pinoy," a reference to Poe's citizenship which is being questioned before the Supreme Court.

The show drew some of its biggest howls when the Sex Bomb Dancers did their version of the current hit television commercial featuring nuns and students clapping over a bottle of Coca-Cola.

Gov't to develop, not sell, real estate property in Japan, says DFA

By Jerome Aning

THE PHILIPPINE government will develop, not sell, its remaining properties in Japan.

This would maximize the use of the properties, a Department of Foreign Affairs official said yesterday. and also help project a positive image for the country.

Undersecretary for administration Franklin Ebdalin said Malacañang has formed a bidding committee to receive proposals for the properties–two in Tokyo and two in Kobe. He clarified that congressional approval was not needed for the development projects.

"We want to make maximum use of the properties and at the same time profit from them," Ebdalin told reporters. "If we must expect the respect of other nations, we have to at least have presentable offices."

He said a previous plan to sell the Fujimien property, which houses the Philippine ambassador's residence in Tokyo, has been abandoned for historical reasons. The property was donated to the government by the Laurel family after the Second World War. Yoko Ono, wife of slain Beatles band member John Lennon and a descendant of the powerful Yasuda business clan, was born there.

Nampedai, the other Tokyo property, is a four-story building that has deteriorated and become an eyesore, according to Ebdalin. The two lots in Kobe are now car parks.

Ebdalin said Nampedai, which was left unoccupied after the embassy moved to Tokyo's Roponggi district during the term of President Joseph Estrada, would be turned over to a private firm for rehabilitation under a 30-year build-operate-transfer arrangement. The DFA will retain one or two floors, while the rest of the building may be leased to commercial establishments.

In the United States, Ebdalin said, the DFA wants to dispose of properties in Seattle and Houston and use the money to buy a permanent house for the consulate in Los Angeles. The department also wants to buy a house and lot for the Philippine Embassy in London, which currently rents its offices for $1 million a year. Meanwhile, he said, the Philippine Center in New York also needs to be repaired.

ABADILLA 5

SC asked to cite hospital chief, jail exec for contempt

By Philip C. Tubeza

LUMANOG: Kidney patient transferred without waiting for Supreme Court ruling.
RANDY HORMILLOSA

THE LAWYER of one of the Abadilla 5 yesterday asked the Supreme Court to cite two government officials for contempt for "illegally" transferring his client from the National Kidney and Transplant Institute to the New Bilibid Prisons last week.

Lawyer Soliman Santos Jr. said Bureau of Corrections chief Dionisio Santiago and NKTI Director Enrique Ona had caused the transfer of his client, Lenido Lumanog, "despite a Supreme Court resolution on Tuesday saying Lumanog may remain at the NKTI" where he had undergone a kidney transplant.

In a "most urgent motion for various relief," Santos also asked the high tribunal to order Santiago to return Lumanog to the NKTI or take him to a public hospital in order to assess his condition.

Lumanog was one of five men convicted of the murder of former Constabulary Col. Rolando Abadilla. The men are appealing their conviction before the SC, claiming they had been tortured by police into confessing.

BuCor petition

Santos said Lumanog was transferred without waiting for the SC decision on the petition to allow the transfer filed by BuCor chief legal officer Roberto Sangalang on Feb. 3.

It was the BuCor petition that the SC was replying to when it said on Tuesday that Lumanog could remain at the NKTI.

The high court had also directed Sangalang to submit BuCor's letters from Ona, which had said that Lumanog could be discharged from the NKTI.

"Unfortunately, without waiting for the Supreme Court's action on their own motion, the BuCor through Sangalang, backed up by an NBP recovery team, effected the physical transfer of Lumanog," Santos said.

"Lumanog is not just a prisoner in the custody of the NBP but also an accused-appellant whose death conviction is on automatic review before the SC. In other words, he is veritably in *custodia legis*, in custody of the law as ruled by the SC," he said.

Very angry

He said the NBP team had tried three times before to take Lumanog from the NKTI but failed. When they succeeded on Wednesday, Sangalang allegedly told Santos, Lumanog and the latter's wife that BuCor chief Santiago "was very angry that the transfer was not being effected and that BuCor's disposition was 'to risk it,' even without an SC order."

Santos said the transfer has led to the deterioration of Lumanog's condition.

He said Lumanog has caught a cold, which his doctors said "could be the start of a rejection symptom and could be aggravated by conditions at the NBP hospital."

Always dizzy

He said Lumanog was always "dizzy because of the extreme heat in his so-called isolation or antiseptic room there.

"Even though he has an electric fan, it still gets very hot during the day because there is no ventilation since there are no windows in the concrete room," Santos said.

"There is also no water flowing from the faucet in the room and so pails of water have to be brought in from time to time," he added.

He said the NBP hospital had no ready supply of the medicines needed by Lumanog; neither did the NKTI provide him with a supply of medicines when they discharged him.

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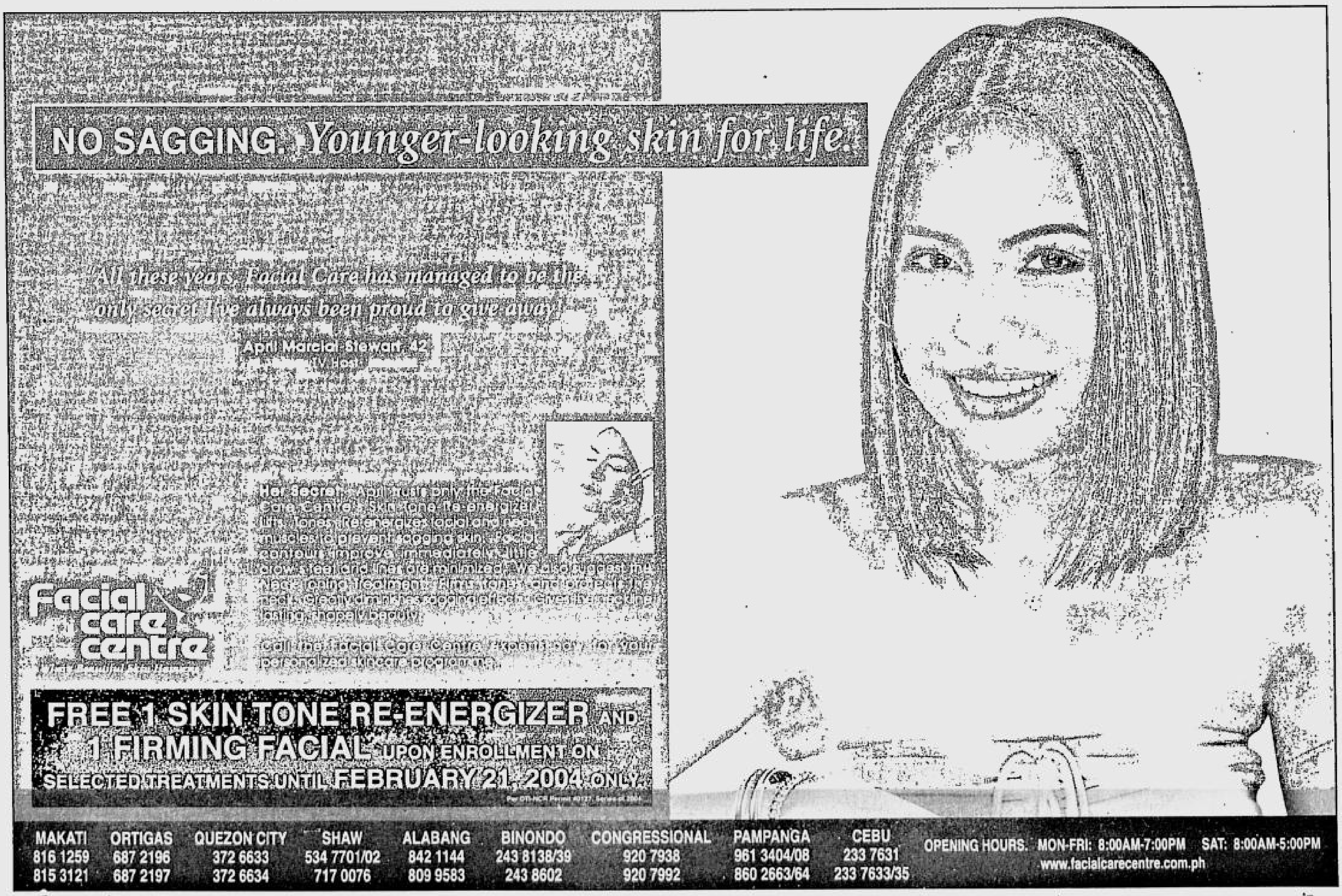
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NBI files sedition charges ...

From page A1

Bonifacio, the mutineers' lawyer Ruel Pulido distributed a two-page statement that scored the administration for trying to disqualify opposition coalition candidate Fernando Poe Jr. and frustrating the will of the people.

The statement, signed by Marine Captains Gary Alejano and Nicanor Faeldon, Army Captains Milo Maestrecampo and Gerardo Gambala, and Navy Ltsg. James Layug and Ltsg. Antonio Trillanes IV, said the country's democratic institutions were being threatened by those in power.

The government case against the mutineers alleges that the officers were actually planning a coup, but were preempted.

Nine-man junta

Wycoco said Baltazar, Asadon and Serafica had implicated Saycon and the others in the alleged plot to replace the current administration through protest actions to be initiated by the military and supported by a civilian component.

The allegedly seditious statements were made on seven occasions in different locations including a former congressman's Makati house, the Manila Polo Club, and an Ayala Alabang residence.

In his affidavit, Asadon said Saycon had planned to replace the government with a temporary nine-man collective leadership patterned after the proletariat government of China to be replaced later by a parliamentary government patterned after the French.

The statements were made during the Dec. 20, 2003 Christmas party of Copa at the house of former Rep. Jose "Peping" Cojuangco in Makati, where several military officers were present.

The plan, said Asadon, would kick off with a protest of senior military officers, and would allegedly be supported by 80 percent of the military.

Montelibano's part was to gather popular support for the protests.

Asadon also said booklets, titled "Let Us All Build A Strong Nation" authored by Emmanuel Yap, had been distributed to the military officers present in one of the meetings with Saycon.

As to the reported participation of Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Wycoco said it was only Hasan, quoting Saycon, who mentioned Guingona's name in his affidavit.

Wycoco said the NBI had found that politicians mentioned in news reports were innocent of any crime. He also said his agency was not monitoring any particular group, only individuals.

In danger

The mutiny leaders said they would not be silenced.

"The people, democratic institutions and processes that we are duty-bound to protect are in danger. They are slowly being pushed to the brink of destruction by individuals who are unrelenting and unrepentant in their determination to perpetuate their unjust and erroneous hold on power," their statement read.

In an apparent reference to Poe, the six Magdalo leaders added: "We may, in the recent past, have been silenced, but we have not been blinded. Nor do we choose to turn a blind eye to the current maneuverings of those in power to frustrate the will of the people by eliminating their opponents through the prostitution of our justice system."

All six are facing rebellion charges before the Makati Regional Trial Court and are now detained in the heavily guarded compound of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in Camp Aguinaldo. Court-martial charges against them have been dropped by a military court.

Poe's campaign sign

After yesterday's court-martial session, the soldiers unfurled their old red flag which they had used as a rallying point last July. The red flag has the old letter "K" in the middle of a white sun.

While posing for media at the Philippine Army Officers Club, the soldiers also showed off the red armbands they wore during the mutiny and flashed the "No. 1" sign, or the index finger pointed upward—Poe's campaign sign.

"We want to show that it's not true the flags were bought from somewhere. The soldiers themselves make those flags," said Pulido.

Brig. Gen. Ferdinand Bocobo, president of the court-martial, was not amused.

"To me, it is a disrespect to military justice. My job as president is to give justice and a speedy trial so the accused would not suffer anymore," Bocobo said.

Freedom of expression

But Pulido disagreed. "They are entitled to their right of freedom of expression. There is nothing wrong with those flags. If you go to Camp Aguinaldo, you will see the very same symbol there painted on the wall. What's so wrong about painting it on a flag?"

Pulido added that the soldiers had always respected the court-martial proceedings against them and Bocobo's panel hearing the charges.

"I think it is not accurate to say they are showing disrespect because you will see them during the proceedings itself, they are also behaved, following the proceedings intently, quietly like true professional soldiers," he said.

The lawyers said that since the proceedings were over, the soldiers "are allowed to exercise their right to expression. I don't think that is a breach of military discipline. Just like military soldiers who are off-duty, they can do what they want. I think its unfair to say it is disrespect."

The proceedings yesterday were adjourned for the third time after Pulido again invoked the accused's right to peremptory challenge, or their right to "challenge" any member of the military tribunal hearing their case.

Once a member of the tribunal is challenged, that member automatically steps down from the tribunal and a replacement is called in.

It's retired generals' turn to air gripes

By Alcuin Papa

CALL them the older version of the Kawal Pilipino.

But while the younger ones conducted a press conference to denounce the government with their faces covered, there was nothing clandestine in the press conference of their elders.

An alliance of retired generals introduced themselves as the "Katapatan sa Watawat at Lahing Kayumanggi (Kawal Ka)." They include retired generals Tomas Diaz, Cesar Fortuno, Pedro Navarro, Ely Maristela, Commodore Larry Andes and Col. Rey Cabauatan.

Other members are retired generals Cirilo Bueno, Pedro Balbanero, Jaime Echeverria, Angel Sadang, Rodolfo Garcia, Antonio Villanueva, Salvador Flores, Cesar Abella and Commodore Nicanor Hernandez.

"We believe that there is no more hope for our country. Corruption is rampant. Our leaders do not care for the poor. Change depends on us," the generals said.

But President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday fired a broadside at the opposition for always dragging the military into the political arena.

"I will not condone the exploitation of the Armed Forces, in any manner, for partisan ends," said Ms Macapagal in a statement. "I urge our detractors to refrain from dragging the AFP into politics as this is inimical to the national interest."

The President said she had obtained a "firm commitment" from the AFP that they would "hold the line for the Constitution and the rule of law."

"The military will assist in ensuring honest, orderly and peaceful elections and will resist any actions that contravene this mandate," she said. *With a report from Gil Cabacungan Jr.*

Malaysia says MILF struggle futile

From page A1

sumption of long-stalled peace negotiations with the country's biggest Moro separatist group, were to have been held in Kuala Lumpur starting yesterday.

Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar told the Malaysian news agency Bernama that any peace settlement between the two sides would have to respect the territorial integrity of the Philippines.

"I think they (MILF rebels) must see the futility of continuing the struggle without end," Syed Hamid was quoted as saying Sunday. More than 120,000 people have died in the 32-year separatist war in Mindanao and outlying isles.

Not even OIC

Syed Hamid said the MILF rebels had little support for their goal of setting up a separate Muslim state—not even from the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the world's largest Muslim grouping.

Malaysia, which has hosted intermittent talks between the Philippine government and the MILF rebels, cited unspecified "administrative reasons" for the postponement of the exploratory talks, according to Lt. Gen. Rodolfo Garcia, Armed Forces of the Philippines vice chief of staff who was to take part in the meeting.

"We are expecting (the talks) to be held any time within a few days," said Garcia, head of the Philippine ceasefire panel.

The exploratory talks were expected to discuss the specific role of a team of 25 Malaysian observers that would monitor a shaky ceasefire between Manila and the MILF.

Minor hitch

The MILF rebels reportedly wanted Manila to fully comply first with their demands, including the dropping of criminal charges against top rebel leaders and a military pullout from the so-called Buliok Complex, a key rebel base in Central Mindanao seized by soldiers last year.

Teresita Quintos Deles, presidential adviser on the peace process, said the delay in the exploratory talks with the MILF was just a "minor hitch" on the road toward lasting peace in Mindanao.

Deles said the Philippine government expected to hold exploratory talks with the MILF within the month.

Syed Hamid said that he remained optimistic about the peace process.

"It (peace) can be achieved," Syed Hamid was quoted as saying. "There's a lot of sincerity and a serious desire to address the problems."

Heavy fighting between government troops and rebels in Buliok, a vast swampland where the MILF maintained camps, stalled plans to hold the peace talks last year. The fighting has since eased considerably.

Remote

The administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo had expressed hope it could strike peace deals with the Moro and communist rebels before the May presidential election. But analysts have said the chances of ending the twin revolts anytime soon are remote.

THE GOVERNMENT peace panel arrives from Oslo, Norway, where it wrapped up the opening round of the resumption of peace talks with the NDF. From left: Sedfrey Candelaria, Tarlac Gov. Jose "Apeng" Yap, chair Silvestre Bello III and presidential adviser on the peace process Teresita Deles. ROGER MARGALLO

The MILF, estimated by the military to have some 12,000 fighters, is the biggest of four factions fighting for an Islamic state in Mindanao.

Intelligence agencies suspect some of the group's more radical members are maintaining this with the Jemaah Islamiyah, a Southeast Asian extremist group linked to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network. *Reports from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., AP and Reuters*

Anybody but Gloria, her 3 rivals agree

From page A1

sition coalition candidate Fernando Poe Jr. for failing to show up at the forum.

"I'm so happy that my two friends here are certainly willing to be examined. Those who are absent, they will have to show you whether they are willing to be examined," Roco said.

He also said Ms Macapagal and Poe should "give an excuse slip" to explain their absence.

Join forces vs cheating

Roco, Lacson and Villanueva vowed to join forces to prevent massive cheating in the May 10 elections.

"In our case, even in our campaign we're complying with all the rules," Roco said. "We will certainly adhere to the search for a meaningful and honest elections."

He admitted, however, that he, Lacson and Villanueva had yet to work out the specifics of cooperation.

Villanueva emphasized that rival presidential candidates were "bound to protect the ballots and ensure credible and honest elections."

"And millions of our volunteers will be scattered in various barangays (and) precincts (to) guard the ballots," he said.

Roco said that if he were "blessed by the Filipino people" come election time, he would seek the help of Villanueva and Lacson in running the country for the next six years.

"If not blessed, we certainly will help whoever is blessed. But it is very clear that there is a need for change. Seventy to 80 percent of the population—no matter how you count it; no matter what the surveys (say)—want a change. The issue is who to change (Macapagal) Arroyo with?"

Reforms needed

All three candidates agreed that the country badly needed reforms to put it back on track.

Lacson said candidates should have "due concern for our beloved country" to see that there "is a need for a real and meaningful change."

"The present government does not even want to accept that such a problem exists. That we have to get this nation back on track once more. The next presidency will be an excruciatingly difficult one. For me, (what) we need is a clear, resolute and honest leadership," said Lacson.

The next president should be "ready to challenge all mindsets and entrenched interests," he added.

Lacson lamented, however, that the "one who must answer a lot of the questions for the country's woes is not here."

Probably, he said, "she doesn't want to be asked those questions."

Minimum qualifications

Roco pointedly said it was not true that the qualifications for President were limited to being 40 years old and a natural-born citizen.

These are the minimum qualifications, he said. "But the oath of office of the president lays out the (other) qualifications. You then swear as president: 'I shall perform all the duties of my office faithfully and with fidelity. I shall preserve and defend the Constitution. That I will execute all the laws. That I will do justice to every man. I shall implement the laws equally for all. And that I hereby swear that I will consecrate my life to the service of the nation.'"

Firing a broadside at Poe and his Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino slate, Roco said a candidate "must know a little of the Constitution and law to protect and defend it. You must study the laws, so that you can execute the laws. You must have studied how to balance interests so that there will be justice for all. Those are the qualifications."

Wide range of issues

"It cannot be unreal, it cannot be celluloid. In two hours, love is born, love disintegrates, and love is captured again in the movie. That is not so in the real world," Roco said.

The three candidates responded to a wide range of issues, from the budget deficit to the one-China policy.

Focap president Viswa Nathan said Poe sent his regrets, saying he was on a "three-day break."

Malacañang did not reply but a representative of Ms Macapagal's media and ecclesiastical adviser Conrado Limcaoco showed up.

Among the issues raised during the two-hour open forum were the budget deficit, corruption, tax collection, attracting foreign investments, foreign policy and overseas workers.

Roco gave the longest answers, and at one point apologized for going beyond the three-minute time limit. Lacson gave the shortest answers.

No to Iraq war

The three candidates disagreed with the Macapagal administration's all-out support for the US war in Iraq.

Roco called for a "review" of the policy since the US government was under fire for allegedly giving a misleading picture of the Iraqi threat.

Villanueva said the country "cannot be dragged into a war that is not right before the eyes of God and of the civilized world."

Lacson categorically said there was "no real justification for the US to go to war against Iraq." He said he would pull out the Philippine humanitarian contingent sent to Iraq.

The candidates also said the country's security and economic ills have deepened under Ms Macapagal's leadership.

"We are into most critical times," Lacson said, citing a huge budget deficit, widespread crime and corruption and political turmoil that have stymied the economy and driven away investors.

"The fiscal crisis that has engulfed us threatens to blow into an Argentina-like situation in another three years unless firm resolve and common sacrifices are undertaken," Lacson said, referring to the Latin American nation's default on debt payments in December 2001.

No to strongman rule

All three candidates said authoritarian rule was not an option. Roco said the country would face a security problem as long as the military remained restive and dabbled in politics.

The military backed peaceful "people power" revolts that ousted Ferdinand Marcos in 1986 and Joseph Estrada in 2001. Ms Macapagal has survived a coup attempt and a mutiny by young officers last July. *With reports from AP, AFP*

Robin, Darna take up cudgels for opposition

From page A1

She noted that "so much disinformation" was traditionally passed around during national political campaigns, and that mobile phone texting these days made this much easier.

'Fabrication'

Yesterday, Herrera and Legarda immediately found their hands full with problems being encountered by media practitioners covering the Poe trail.

The two strongly contradicted published reports that Poe almost punched a foreign wire service photographer during a sortie in Lubao, Pampanga, last week.

That was pure "fabrication," Legarda said, insisting she should know because "I'm with him 12 hours a day." Poe himself didn't remember the supposed incident, she added.

Natural reaction

Herrera's explanation was that Poe had merely turned abruptly, perhaps instinctively, toward where his hand was supposedly hit by a camera.

"That's natural," Herrera said. "It could have been an assassin."

"Darna" and "Robin" were also told of the rough treatment that the media men were getting from a group of super minions, aka Poe's close-in security. The species is known in show business as "*hawi* boys," for their task of "parting the sea" of people to clear the way for their boss.

The Dynamic Duo promised to raise the issue before the KNP's "Justice League."

Cops run over NPA land mine; 9 killed

AT LEAST nine policemen were killed and three others were seriously wounded when the vehicle they were riding in hit a land mine believed laid by New People's Army rebels in Barangay Bangad, Milagros, Masbate yesterday afternoon.

Col. Ramon Santos, chief of the 901st Infantry Brigade based in Villahermosa, Daraga, Albay, said the policemen belonging to the 506th Provincial Police Mobile Group were responding to the reported killing on Monday morning of the chair of Barangay Balod, also in Milagros.

The incident happened at about 2:30 p.m., Santos said, with the bodies of the nine policemen brought to the Masbate Hospital. The identities of the cops hadn't been released as of press time last night.

Last week, at least 40 NPA rebels ambushed an Air Force engineering battalion in Uson town.

Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, spokesperson of the Communist Party of the Philippines, said the NPA's Romullo Jallores Command could have laid the land mine.

He said the bomb was "command-detonated" by the leader of the NPA unit.

"The NPA guerrillas could have been in the area even before the enemy troops arrived," Rosal said in Filipino.

He added the incident was part of the rebels' heightened offensives against government targets in the midst of peace talks between the government and the communist rebels.

Maj. Jose Broso, spokesperson of the Southern Luzon Command, condemned the incident, saying it was a clear violation of the Geneva Convention. *Joyce Mejillano, Michael Jaucian and Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

New NSA to probe 'threats'

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

NEW National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales yesterday said he would look into the "implications" of the threats made by supporters of opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr. that there would be civil war if he was disqualified from the presidential race.

"These are statements that need to be evaluated. I will look into that," Gonzales said in a phone interview.

He said statements that Poe could lose only if the administration cheated him added to the instability in the country.

He said that after evaluating the threats, he would recommend to the President the steps to be taken to uphold the law.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye yesterday confirmed that Gonzales was the new NSA, replacing Roilo Golez who is running for congressman in Parañaque City.

Bunye said Gonzales took his oath of office before Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo on Thursday.

Gonzales, who was named NSA after resigning as presidential adviser on special concerns, justified his foray into the political arena by saying that political developments affect national security.

His first day at work yesterday was spent in a briefing with National Security Council officials.

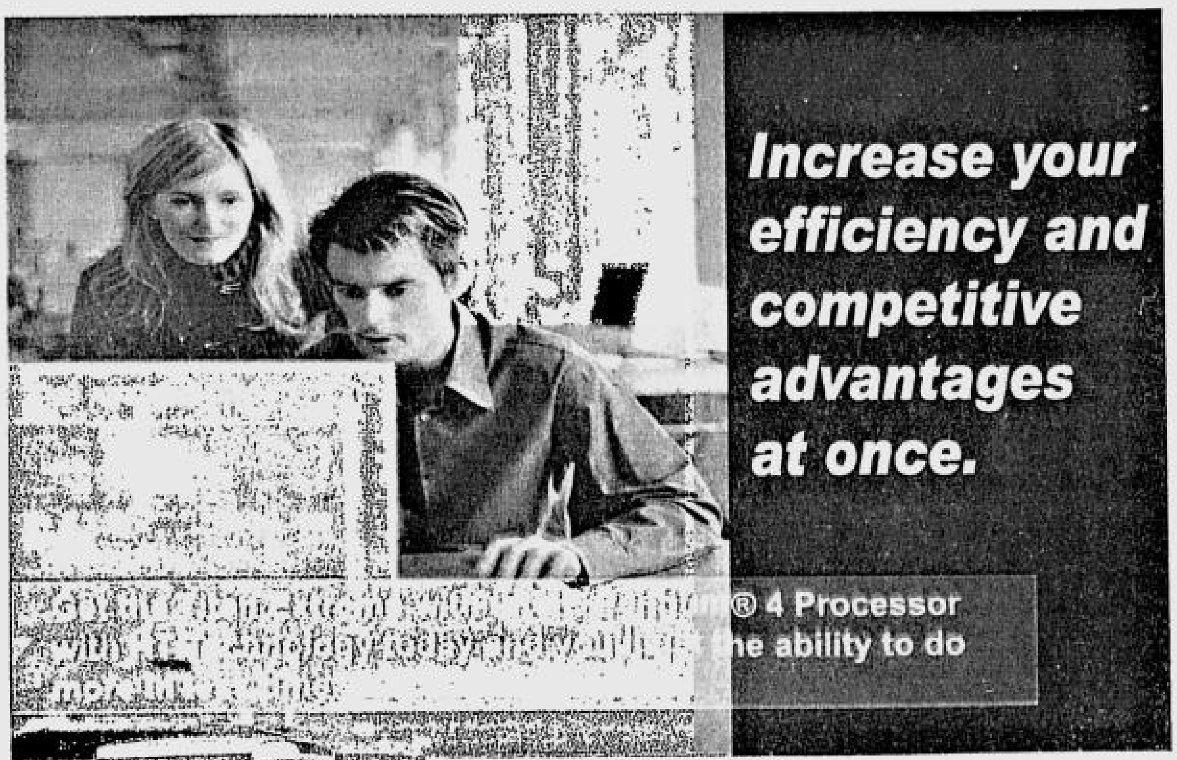
Gonzales said the President offered him the NSA post about two weeks ago. This was right after he had resigned as presidential adviser without giving a reason.

He said the presidential adviser on special concerns office will be headed in the meantime by its officer in charge, Abraham Purugganan.

Gonzales' resignation had sparked speculation he was miffed at having been bypassed for the national defense portfolio, which went to another presidential adviser, Eduardo Ermita.

Gonzales, however, said he would still support the candidacy of President Macapagal-Arroyo but his party, the Partido Demokratiko at Sosyalista ng Pilipinas, had yet to decide whom to support for vice president and senator.

Gonzales was reported to have said that he will not support Ms Macapagal's running mate, Sen. Noli de Castro, and some of the administration K-4 senatorial candidates.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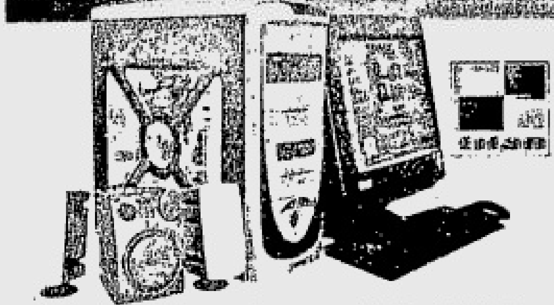

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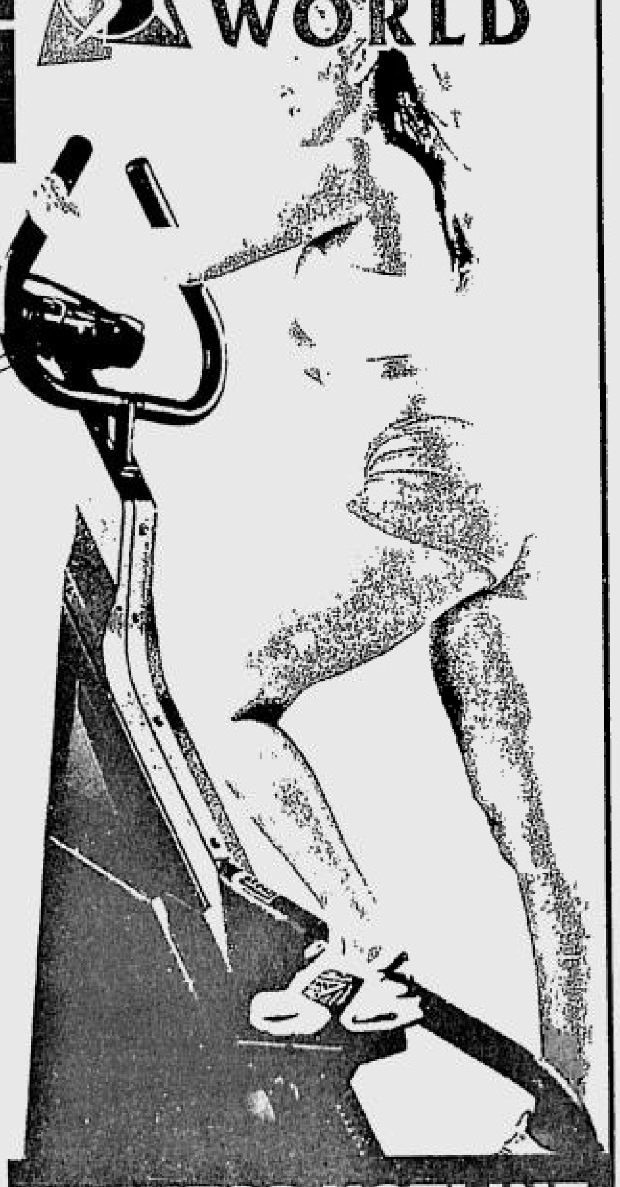

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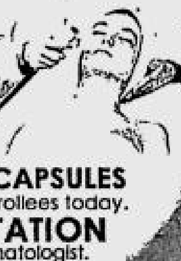

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Gov't-NDF talks may resume in China

PEACE talks between the government and communist rebels are to resume in March, possibly in China, President Macapagal-Arroyo's spokesman said yesterday.

The two sides concluded four days of negotiations in Norway last weekend.

"They are discussing the possible venue. Somebody has mentioned that China would be a possible venue, but we still have to confirm this," presidential spokesman Ignacio Bunye said on government radio.

He said it was understood that the negotiations would resume next month.

At the Oslo meeting, both parties signed a statement calling on the US, the European Union members, Canada and Australia to support the efforts of the parties in resolving the issue of the rebels being labeled "terrorists."

The National Democratic Front, which represents the communist party and the New People's Army, had demanded that the Philippine government join it in its demand that the Western countries strike it from their terrorist blacklists.

The terrorist tag has hampered the guerrillas' ability to raise funds abroad for their 35-year armed campaign, prompting them to step up extortion activities and attacks back home. *AFP*

Ka Roger laughs off bid to stop poll fees

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

LUCENA CITY—Communist Party of the Philippines spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal yesterday laughed off President Macapagal-Arroyo's appeal for the insurgents to stop collecting "permit-to-campaign" fees from political candidates.

"She can [try to] stop it if she can. That's another slip of GMA's patented arrogance, when even her own military and police cannot contain the rush of PTC payors nationwide," Rosal said in a mobile phone interview.

On Saturday, following the successful initial round of peace talks between the government and the communist National Democratic Front in Norway, the President asked the rebels to show good faith by stopping the collection of permit-to-campaign fees and by returning the money already collected to the politicians.

Rosal said the government should not meddle in the collection by the New People's Army, the armed wing of the CPP, of PTC fees and revolutionary taxes.

"The urgent task ahead is for the [government] and NDF to discuss the more substantive agenda like socioeconomic reforms, which is at the root of the present economic crisis that is breeding this armed conflict. The PTC and revolutionary taxes are just minor resulting issues," Rosal said.

Rosal, however, maintained that as a revolutionary organization, the CPP had the right to impose taxes in its areas of operation, including permit-to-campaign fees during elections.

"I doubt whether GMA is aware that most of the administration candidates have been making a beeline to the NPA to settle their PTC fees in their respective areas," he said.

"This only shows that they recognize the political authority of the people's democratic government," he added.

Instead of cash, Rosal said, some politicians give in kind, such as arms and ammunition.

Vega, 82

IRENEA "Nening" Salvacion Vega died on Feb. 14, 2004 at the age of 82.

Irenea, the wife of the late Mario M. Vega, is survived by her children: Aristeo and Nelia Narido; Ma. Aparicion and Romeo del Castillo; Raul and Maria Lourdes Abola; Oswaldo and Corazon Santos; Sister Marietta, OSC; Carlitos and Bebie Elena Laguican; Natividad and Venancio Panganduyon and grandchildren.

Her body lies in state at the Vega Ancestral House in Balingasag, Misamis Oriental. Interment will be on Saturday, Feb. 21, 2004 at the Balingasag Catholic Cemetery after the 3 p.m. Mass.

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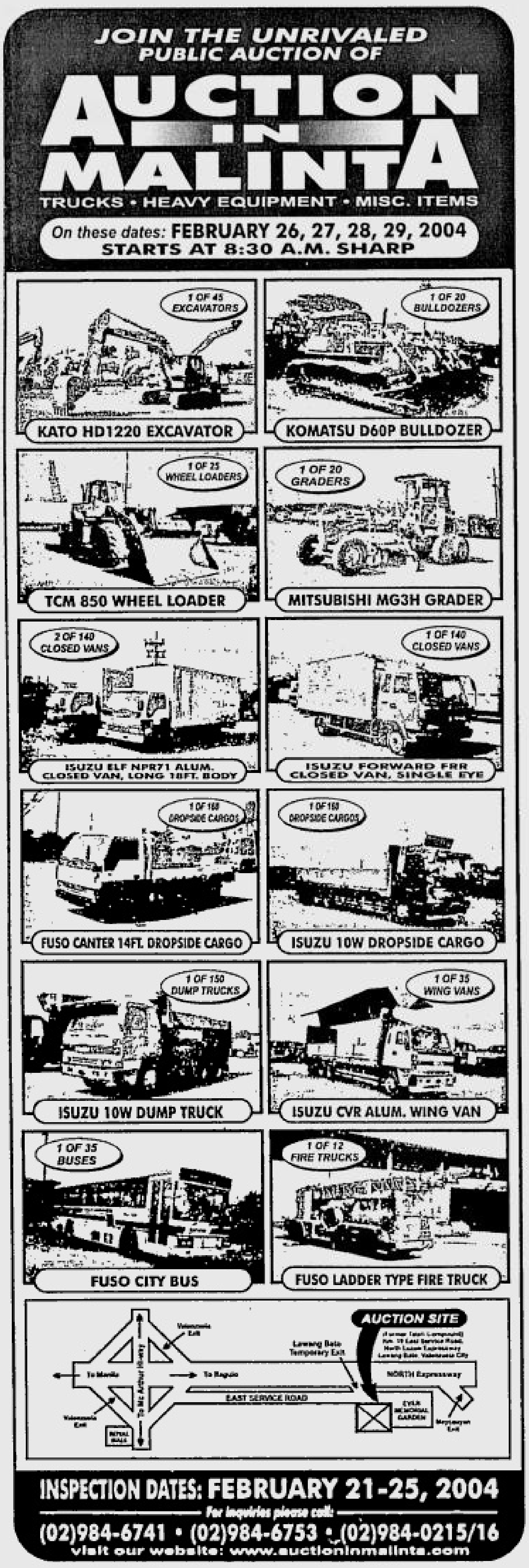
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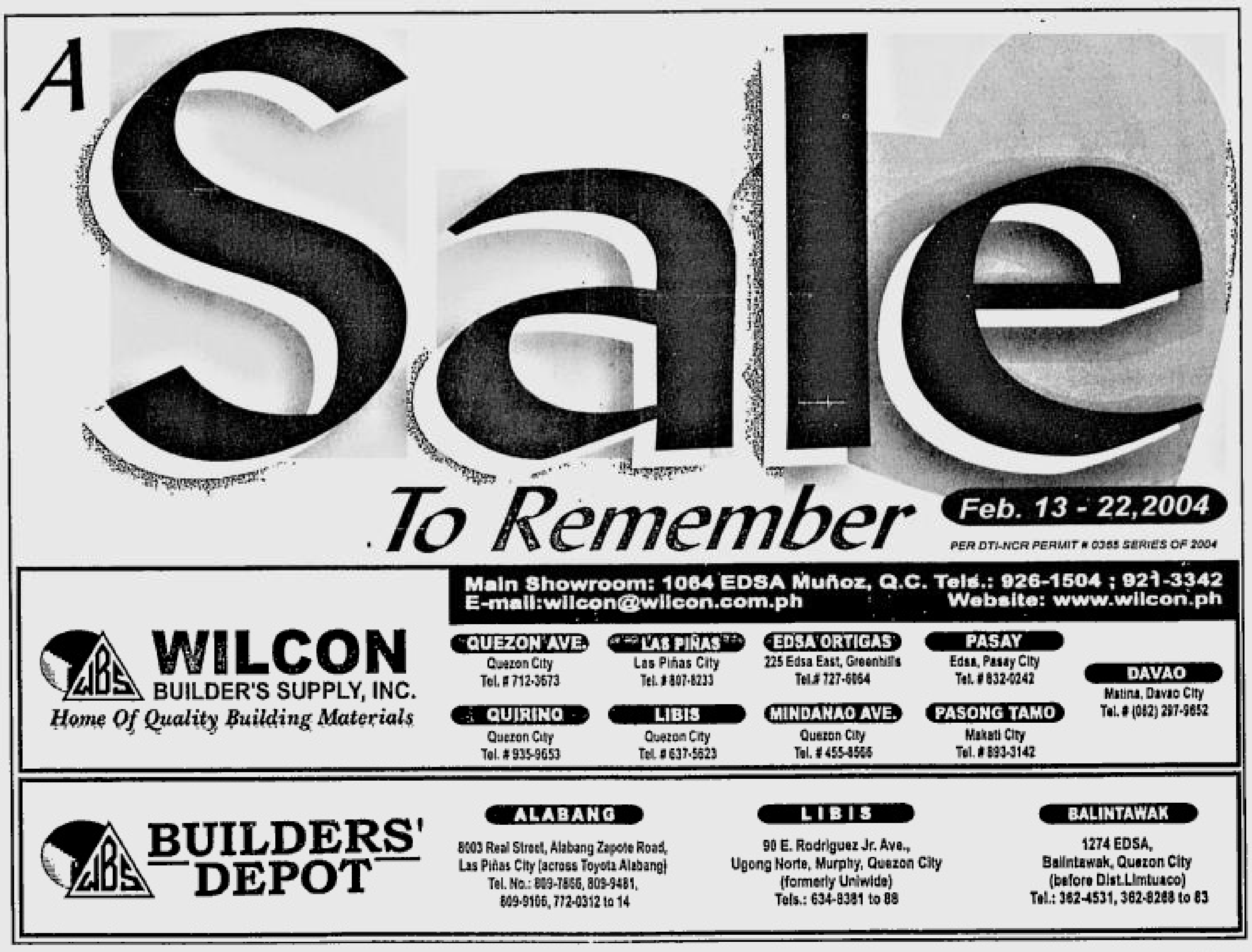
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Manapat snubs arraignment, risks arrest

By Armand N. Nocum

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Tuesday, February 17, 2004
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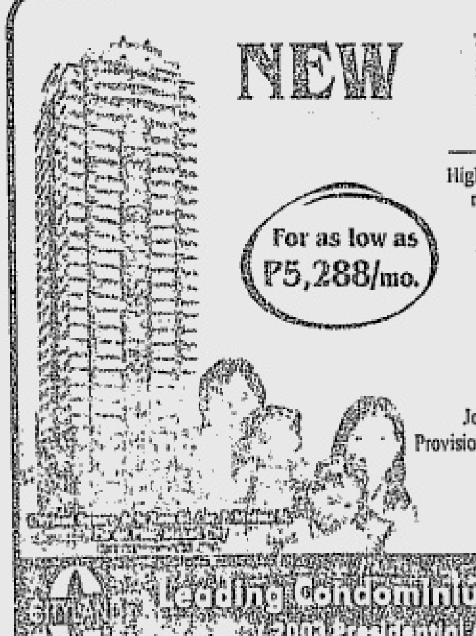

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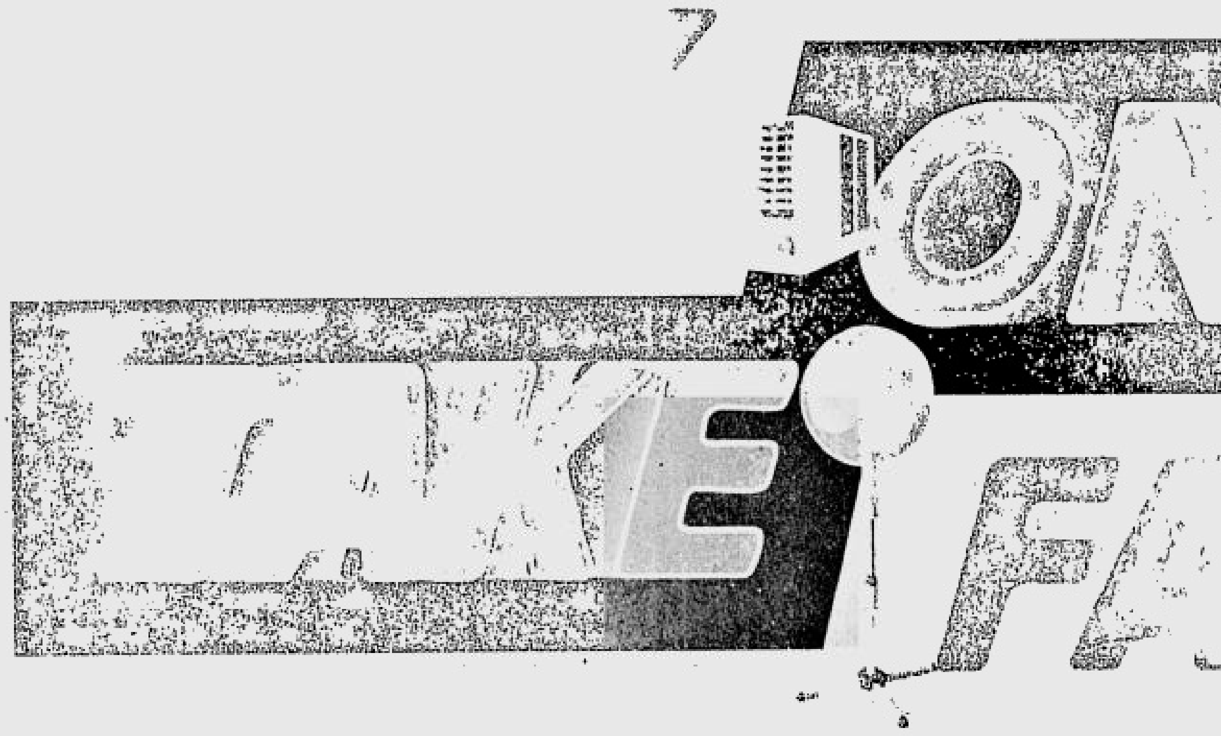

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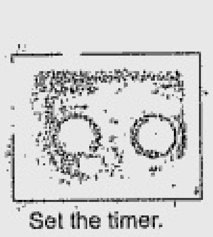

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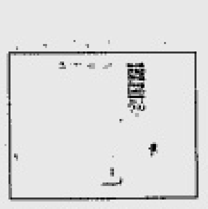

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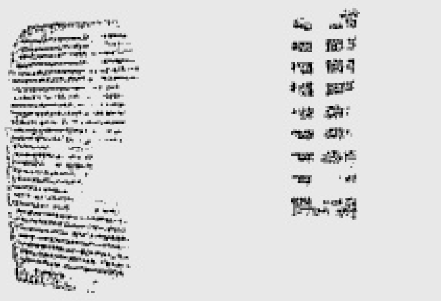

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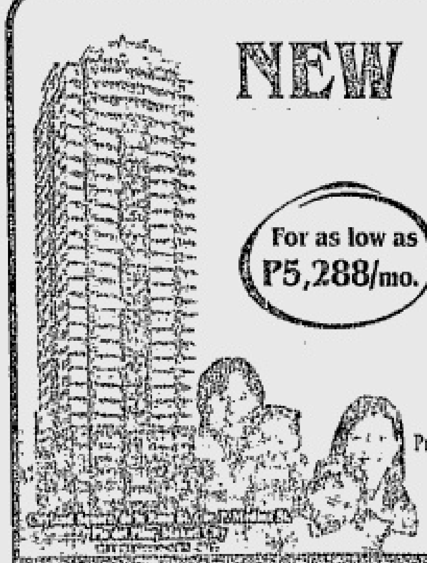

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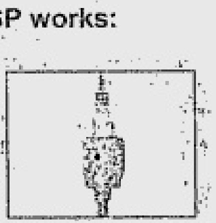

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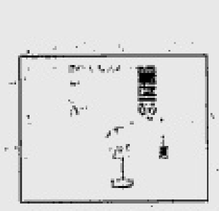

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India, Pakistan return to negotiations

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan—Nuclear-armed rivals India and Pakistan began historic meetings Monday aimed at preparing the way for a sustained peace dialogue on Kashmir and other disputes that have kept the neighbors at loggerheads for decades.

Pakistan is keen to show quick progress during the three days of talks, which also are likely to cover confidence-building measures in the nuclear field to avoid an accident—especially considering admissions of leaks of nuclear technology by the father of Pakistan's nuclear program.

Jalil Abbas Jilani, a director general in Pakistan's Foreign Ministry, and Arun Kumar Singh, a joint secretary in India's External Affairs Ministry, shook hands and smiled before the start of the meeting.

Singh is leading a four-member Indian team at the talks, the first real test of the two sides' willingness to show flexibility on long-entrenched positions, such as the disputed Kashmir region—the cause of two of the countries' three wars since their 1947 independence.

A "line of control" divides Kashmir between India and Pakistan, but both claim the territory in its entirety. More than 65,000 people have been killed in an insurgency that has raged in India-controlled portions of the territory since 1989.

In the latest violence, suspected separatist rebels shot and killed a local politician from the ruling People's Democratic Party and one of his bodyguards Monday as they stood on a roadside in Srinagar, the main city in the Indian portion of Kashmir. Another bodyguard was in critical condition.

After coming close to fighting a fourth war in 2002, India and Pakistan have moved to restore transport links and diplomatic ties. Soldiers in November halted cross-border firing in Kashmir.

India is also set to embark on its first cricket tour of Pakistan since 1989—a breakthrough for the two cricket-crazy nations.

"Pakistan is approaching these talks sincerely and earnestly. We hope that India would demonstrate matching reciprocity," Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokesperson Masood Khan said Sunday.

The two sides are likely to set up expert groups to discuss a dispute over the flow of water to Pakistan from the Wullar barrage in India's Jammu-Kashmir state and fighting at the world's highest battle ground in Siachen, a glacier located 6,000 meters high in the Himalayan territory.

With national elections due in India in April, no major decisions are expected by Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government during this round of talks. However, Vajpayee is expected to stay in power and pursue the peace process.

"We are going to start the process (of negotiations) ... that will mean looking into modalities for the dialogue process and see what meetings should be organized in the next few months to keep up the dialogue on a sustained basis," Indian Foreign Secretary Shashank, who uses only one name, told Press Trust of India in New Delhi. *AP*

N. Korea's Kim turns 62 as world awaits nuke solution

SEOUL—North Korean leader Kim Jong-il turned 62 on Monday basking in lavish praise from his country's state-controlled media but under heavy pressure from an outside world trying to stop his quest for nuclear weapons.

KIM AFP

Kim was hailed as "the sun of the 21st century" and "the most prominent statesman in the present world" at official birthday celebrations in Pyongyang, while people from Nepal to Peru were marking the day with films and parties, state media said.

"The great personality of Kim Jong-il as a political elder in the present world has been exalted by his unusual leadership ability," Yang Hyong-sop, vice president of North Korea's parliament, told a gathering of Pyongyang elite on Sunday.

North Korean publications describe Kim Jong-il as a renaissance man who has flown fighter aircraft, written operas and shot 11 holes-in-one in his first try at golf.

Despite Kim's reputed brilliance, his years in power have coincided with precipitous economic decline and deadly food shortages. About a third of all North Koreans are dependent on outside food aid, which is at risk of drying up.

Hungry people

As his people go hungry, he continues to pursue nuclear weapons as a way of preserving his regime, which President George W. Bush once said is part of an "axis of evil" along with Iran and pre-war Iraq.

Isolated and demonised by much of the outside world, the reclusive leader will cast a large shadow over six-party talks next week in Beijing, where five states will try to persuade North Korea to defuse a crisis that is largely his handiwork.

Kim's envoys will sit down on Feb. 25 with diplomats from Russia, China, South Korea, the United States and Japan to try to resolve the second atomic crisis in a decade on the Korean peninsula.

Kim, who leads the planet's only communist dynasty, is one of few North Koreans with unfettered access to news from the outside world through satellite television and the Internet.

It may not be lost on the Web-surfing Kim that while his 23 million subjects are told daily of his leadership feats, outside his country many are hoping he may see the wisdom of following another country that was once similarly isolated.

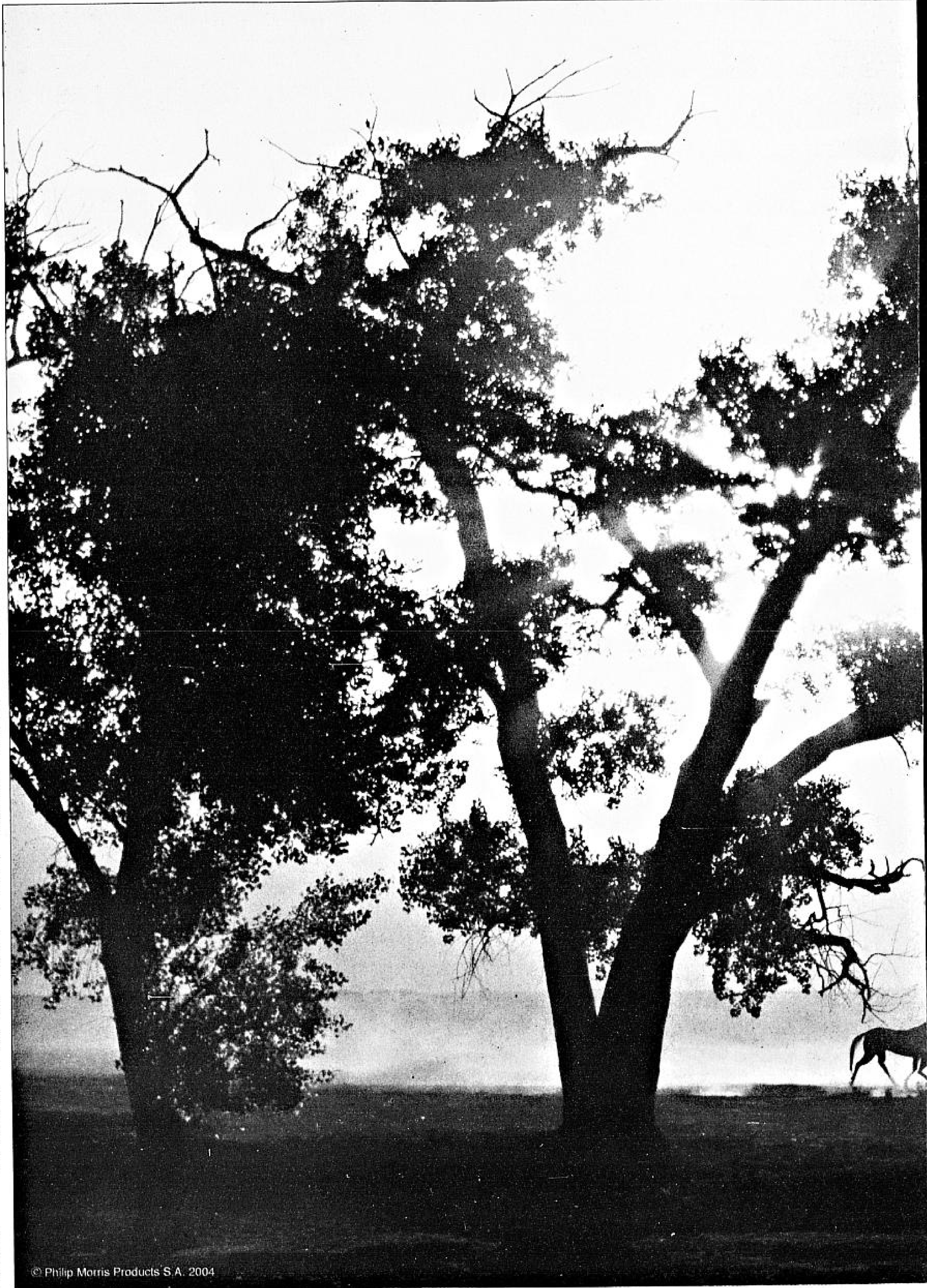
"North Korea needs to make a strategic choice—and make it clear to the world as Libya has done—that it will abandon its nuclear weapons and programs in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner," said US Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly, Washington's chief negotiator with Pyongyang.

Libya example

Libya agreed last year to abandon its nuclear arms program and other weapons of mass destruction. In January, North Korea's Foreign Ministry said hopes that Pyongyang might follow suit were the "folly of imbeciles" who don't understand Kim's country.

Kim's official biography says he was born in the deep forests of sacred Mount Paekdu on Feb. 16, 1942, at a secret camp on the Chinese border as Korean guerrillas fought the Japanese who ruled the peninsula as a colony. Outside historians say he was actually born near Vladivostok in the Soviet Far East.

Groomed since 1980 by his father Kim Il-sung as the communist world's first dynastic successor, he became North Korea's "Great Leader" in 1994 when the elder Kim died. Kim Jong-il took his father's place as supreme military commander in 1991 and formally succeeded him as communist party secretary in 1998. *Reuters*



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Government Warnin
is dangerous

Aborigines riot in Sydney

SYDNEY—Aborigines rioted in a black ghetto near the center of Australia's largest city, Sydney, until early on Monday over the death of a teenage boy, hurling Molotov cocktails and bricks at police in a nine-hour battle.

About 40 police were injured, many with broken bones, in one of the worst outbreaks of civil unrest in the city in a decade. Relatives blamed police for the boy's death.

New South Wales (NSW) state premier Bob Carr called for calm and police reinforcements were brought in, ready for any repeat.

About 100 Aborigines in Redfern, an inner-city suburb that is home to a notorious Aboriginal area called "The Block," attacked 200 riot police on Sunday night and Monday morning.

The riot was triggered by the death of Aborigine Thomas Hickey, 17, who was impaled on a metal fence after falling from his bicycle on Saturday. He died in hospital on Sunday morning.

His mother, Gail, said her son was injured while being pursued by police. Police say patrolling officers merely passed by the boy who then sped off, losing control of his bike.

"A brave stance was taken here last night and that stand will continue while ever our community is ostracized and intimidated and traumatized by the racist police of NSW," said Lyall Munro, an Aboriginal elder in Redfern and longtime black activist.

Carr extended his condolences to Gail Hickey. "There will be an independent investigation into the tragic death of a young man." Protesters, some bare-chested with T-shirts wrapped around their faces, pelted lines of riot police with bricks and bottles, and at one stage pushed a burning garbage bin on wheels toward police and set off fireworks among them. *Reuters*

WORLDBRIEFS

21st bird flu case

HANOI, Vietnam—The human price in Asia's bird flu crisis mounted Monday with Vietnam's 21st case of the disease confirmed, while Singapore's top health official moved to ease fears of travel in Asia by saying it's safe going to countries affected by the virus. The 15-year-old boy in Vietnam was hospitalized with fever, coughing and shortness of breath in northern Thanh Hoa province, where doctors said it was unclear how he was infected. Many of the 20 people killed by bird flu in Asia have come from poultry farming families or otherwise had contact with birds sickened by the outbreak, which was first reported in December in South Korea and now spans across 10 countries. AP

2 Americans killed in Iraq

BAGHDAD—One US soldier was killed and another wounded on Monday when their convoy was hit by a roadside bomb in central Baghdad, a US military spokesperson said. The death brought to at least 374 the number of US soldiers killed in combat since US-led forces invaded Iraq in March. One member of a US religious group was killed and three others wounded in an ambush on their taxi while they were traveling in Iraq last week, the US military said on Monday. The civilians, all US citizens, were found on Saturday in a hospital in Mahmudiyah, 30 km south of Baghdad, by US paratroopers on patrol. *Reuters*

No hope for survivors

MOSCOW—Hopes faded Sunday of finding anyone still alive after the roof of a Moscow swimming pool collapsed on unsuspecting weekend bathers, killing at least 28 of them, as Russian authorities launched a criminal investigation into the company that built it. "Unfortunately no," Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzkhov told Channel One television Sunday evening when asked if there was any hope left of finding any more survivors. Hundreds of rescue workers using heat-seeking equipment had spent the day sifting through the mass of tangled metal, concrete, glass and icy water, the remains of a leisure center whose glass dome suddenly caved in on Saturday evening. More than 100 people were injured. *AFP*

Locked fire exits

BEIJING—Emergency exits in a building that caught fire in northeast China at the weekend were locked, leaving terrified shoppers no choice but to jump from windows or die from the smoke, witnesses told AFP Monday. Police are questioning the security team at the five-story Zhongbai Commercial Plaza in Jilin city where the raging blaze killed 53 and injured 70. The fire was one of two devastating infernos that swept through China Sunday, with the other disaster at a makeshift bamboo temple in an eastern Zhejiang province village killing 40 women and injuring three. *AFP*

Tommy Suharto testifies

JAKARTA—Tommy Suharto, the youngest son of former Indonesian President Suharto who is currently in prison for murder, testified in court Monday that he gave bribe money to associates of former President Abdurrahman Wahid. Tommy told the court that in 2000 he handed $1.7 million to two Wahid associates after the pair allegedly promised that they could overturn an 18-month jail sentence imposed on him for corruption. Tommy said he met Wahid at a hotel in 2000 to ask for clemency and a judicial review of his case and the president told him that his two associates—Nur Muhammad Iskandar and Dodi Sumadi—would deal with him. The two later gave him a letter asking for 15 billion rupiah ($1.7 million) and warned him that if he did not give the money he would end up in jail, Tommy said. He said he gave the money in the US dollars. Wahid later rejected Tommy's appeal and denied receiving any money. *AFP*

No early HK democracy

HONG KONG—China will not allow Hong Kong to choose its next leader through full elections, according to a local press report Monday that quoted unnamed sources close to the Beijing leadership. Also a consultation exercise to seek the public's view on increased democracy in the city was just a "show" intended to placate the pro-democracy camp, the South China Morning Post reported. The source told the Post that Beijing would draw up its own plan to guide what form the next selection process for the city's chief executive would take in 2007. *AFP*

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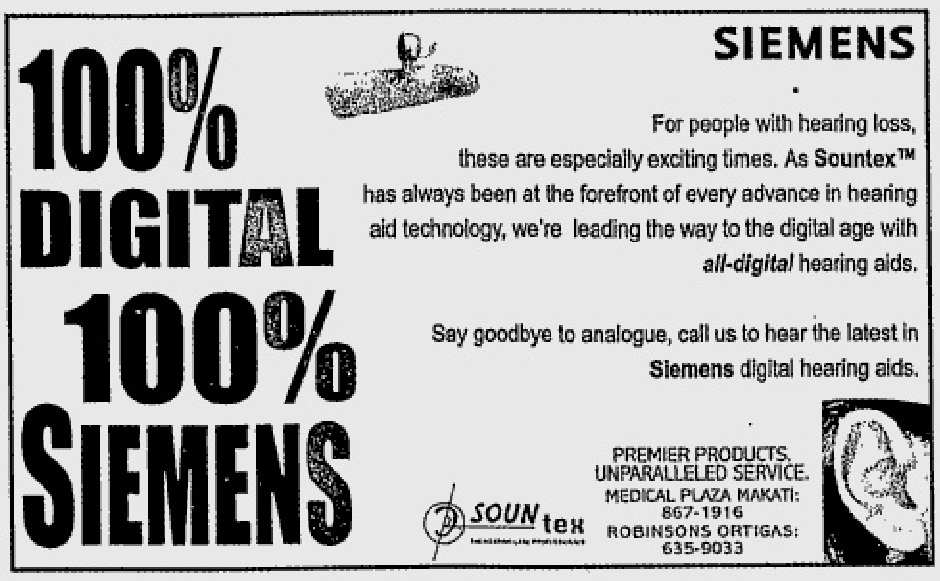

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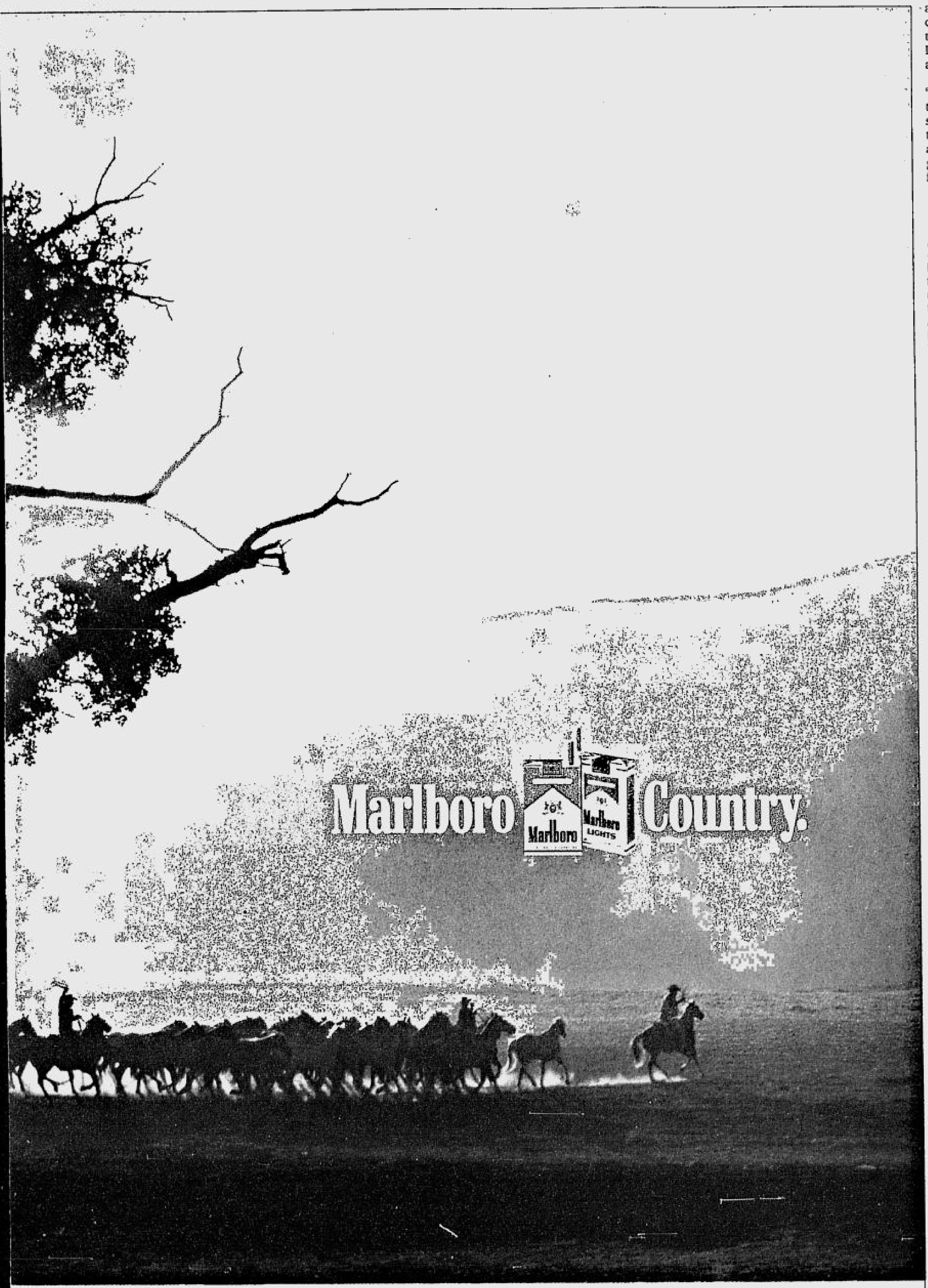

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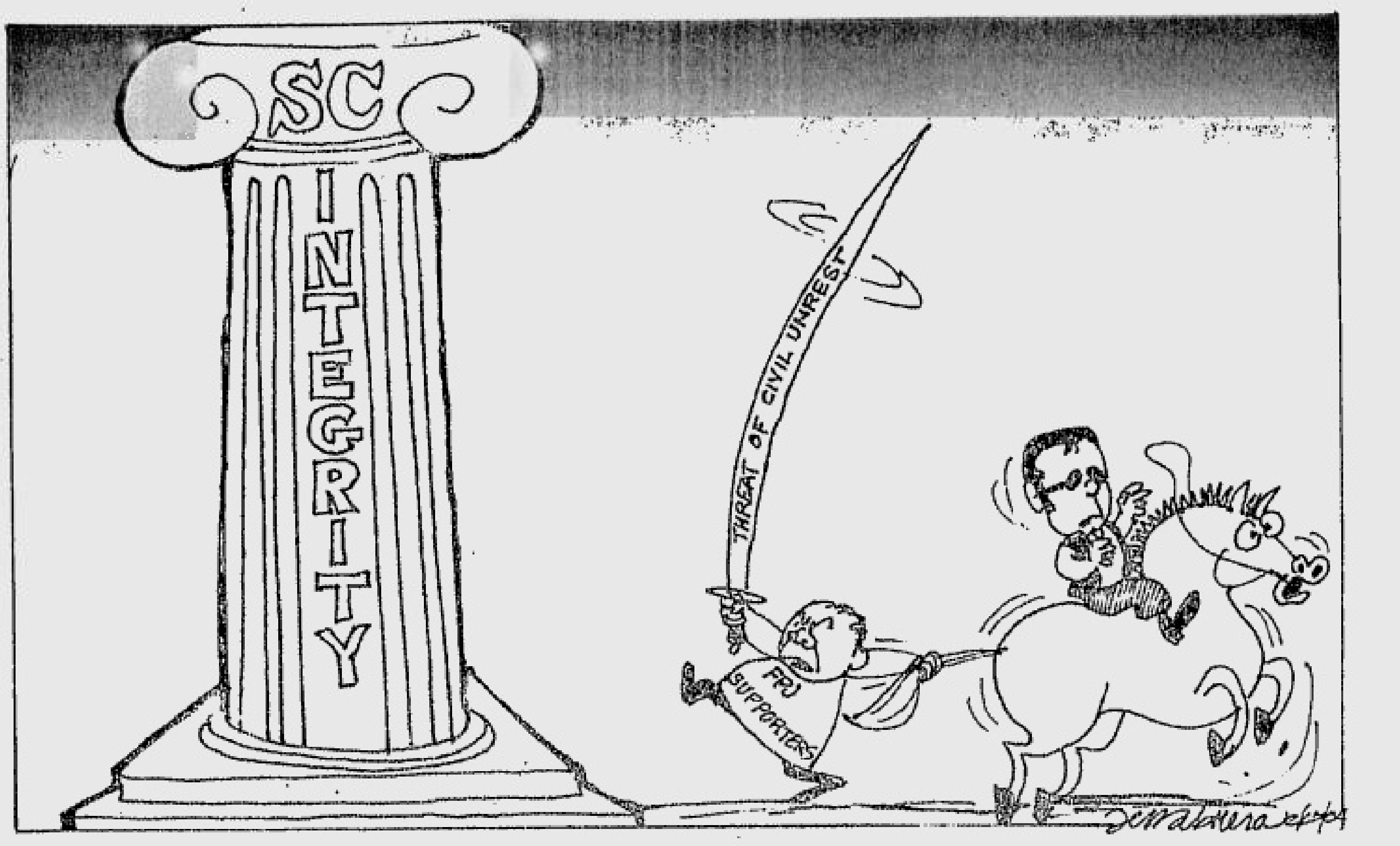

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The first campaign casualties were Vice Mayor Juvy Magsino of Naujan, mayoral candidate of Lakas-CMD, and Leima Fortu, acting secretary general of Karapatan-Oriental Mindoro. It could not be immediately ascertained if the killings were motivated purely by political rivalry or were ordered by the military.

Condemning the killings, Rep. Satur Ocampo, Bayan Muna president, said that the victims were the 36th and 37th members of the left-wing group slain by suspected paramilitary troops since their party began participating in elections in 2001. Ocampo said most of the slayings were committed in Mindoro where Army Col. Jovito Palparan launched an "anti-leftist hysteria campaign" against militant groups two years ago.

Ocampo also said Palparan was facing several investigations for the killings of two human rights workers and the slaying of 18 Bayan Muna members. Now that President Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered an investigation of the Magsino and Fortu slayings, perhaps the inquiry should be expanded to cover the 20 other killings in Mindoro. And to ensure that the military would not interfere in the investigation, she should transfer Palparan to a post in another province.

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Foreigners, especially those from highly developed Western countries, are invariably appalled by the high death toll in Philippine elections. In their countries, elections are quiet, routine affairs; nobody is hurt or killed. Only the egos of losing candidates are bruised.

In the Philippines, candidates for elective positions and their supporters and henchmen are very passionate about elections. For them, every election is a matter of life and death. And indeed, in most cases, an election is a matter of survival. Many candidates and their men see elective positions as economic prizes to be won.

It is not the salary pertaining to the office that is the prime attraction; it is the perks and privileges of the position as well as the opportunity to make a lot of money from graft that matter. An elective post also usually gives the occupant an opportunity to appoint employees and practice other acts of political patronage. Is it any wonder, then, that people will literally kill to win election to a government post?

In 2001 a tabulation prepared by the military showed that private armed groups were responsible for 80 to 82 percent of the violent election cases. Private armies were blamed for 65 percent of the killings and 85 percent of the non-fatal incidents. Communist rebels accounted for 17 to 19 percent of the cases, 25 percent of those killed and 10 percent of the wounded. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front was behind 2 to 5 percent of the violent cases, 10 percent of the killings and 5 percent of the non-fatal incidents.

The figures tend to suggest that one way to stop the killings, or at least keep the casualty figures down, would be to put the private armies under the military acting on orders of the Commission on Elections. In the first place, a gun ban is supposed to have been in force since the start of the election period, so what are hundreds, if not thousands, of heavily armed members of private groups doing in the cities and provinces? The armed groups should be disarmed, and only those who have been granted exemptions by the Comelec should be allowed to bear arms.

This early, because of the strident and sometimes incendiary campaign rhetoric, the political temperature is rising, making the political environment more volatile and more explosive than usual. The political leaders could defuse the situation if they would appeal to their henchmen and supporters to cool down and do their best to keep the campaign and the elections peaceful and orderly.

'Feathered desaparecidos'

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Juan L. Mercado

THE SILVER-haired visitor from Brussels was perplexed. "Where," he asked, "did your birds disappear to?"

His disquiet stemmed from a continent of zealously guarded biodiversity. Storks tiptoe unhindered between tractors in his native Belgium. Robins and pigeons fill parks. "Feed the birds / Two pence a bag" is the haunting "Mary Poppins" refrain.

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Thus, the Mindoro imperial pigeon, Sulu hornbill and Mindanao parrotfinch, among others, vanished. Of 200 native species, 89 are threatened.

"Your children will no longer thrill, as we once did, to the heart-stopping dive of a hawk," National Scientist Dioscoro Umali, told UP graduating students, just before his death.

"We've stripped the land of its beauty," he said. "And the bitter tragedy is: the victims are our grandchildren—flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone."

Yet, the Philippines is a "mega-diversity' nation," notes the UN's latest State of Environment in Asia and the Pacific. It's wedged in the top seven (of 17) countries that "collectively claim more than two-thirds of the earth's biological resources." The Philippines and Australia top Indonesia in number of "endemic" or native birds.

No less than 77 species of egrets, plovers and sandpipers make a stopover in Cebu, as they traverse the East Asian Migratory Flyway to flee winter. Olango Island provides "pit stops" for 67 percent of these transients

Today, the Philippines is a "bio-diversity hot spot"—one of the region's 12. This strip extends from Indian Ocean islands, Eastern Himalayas to Sri Lanka. Many endemic species face extinction within this belt.

Deforestation saw "a number of bird species disappear from Cebu, Negros, Panay and Mindoro," the UN study notes. "Of highest priority for conservation are Indonesia's Lower Sundas, Eastern Himalayas, Luzon (especially Mindoro)" it adds.

On an Ulaan Bator hilltop, I watched hawks, swoop from clear Mongolian skies. Childhood memories of hawks swooping to snatch chicks in outlying barrios resurfaced.

"My grandchildren never saw this," I mumbled. "And they're poorer for the loss."

The Master from Galilee used the image of a hen, sheltering chicks, to underscore the "time of visitation."

Birds perform multiple tasks: from curbing insect infestations to scattering seeds. In the shrinking North Negros Forest Reserve, 20 percent of trees will fail to regenerate, if the present rate of hunting continues, a University of British Columbia study notes.

Like rivers, birds make up a unique and sensitive early warning system. When rivers dry up, or birds disappear, they signal that "the environment is under such stress that species which lived in them for thousands of years, can no longer survive," the Philippines Red Data Book notes.

The graybird and flower-pecker (dicaeum quadricolor) were unique to Cebu. They've been wiped out and are now numbered among "feathered desparecidos."

Cebu Daily News' mascot is the endangered black shama or siloy.

But "I haven't seen a siloy," columnist Roy Lu wrote. "Worse, I have seen other birds that will never sing again : the tukmo, kukuk..."

World Conservation Union surveys in 1992, 1994 and 1996 found : "Concentration of endangered birds is larger in islands like Hawaii, the Philippines, Indonesia or Mauritius."

Island birds are smaller in number and range. They become vulnerable when forests, as in Mindanao, are razed, or rivers like Abra are laced with toxic chemicals and human waste.

In Cebu's Guadalupe river, coliform pollution exploded by 6,000 percent within a four-year period—a candidate for the Guinness Book of Records.

Complacency stems from greed, indifference and ignorance. Used to past abundance, many assume "there's more where they came from." Well, there's none.

But no bird, herb or fish disappears alone, Oxford University's Dr. Norman Meyer warns. 'When they go, so do their unique genes—life building blocks.

Genes are spliced into "miracle rice," high-yielding corn, even Dolly the sheep. Other go into drugs against cancer, AIDS, etc. No one knows what may be needed the day after.

This "killing curve" of species is genetic forfeiture. It seals off little-understood options for our grandchildren. Loss of species is irreversible obliteration of unique life forms. No one has yet invented recall from annihilation. Extinction is forever.

"And what is there to life if a man cannot hear the lonely cry of the whippoorwill?" asks the mythical Chief Seattle. "If all the (birds) were gone, men would die from a great loneliness of spirit."

* * *

E-mail juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph.

Confidence men

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THE ECONOMIC woes of this country, say Fr. Jose Magadia of the Ateneo Center for Social Policy and former Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Cielito Habito, owe to the politics of personality. The voters are easily swayed by song and dance rather than fact and figure. "The reality," says Habito, "is that everything boils down to a choice between personalities." Magadia agrees: "It is noticeable that no detailed and comprehensive plans have really been taken by the presidential candidates." Because the candidates do not offer any program, the voters are left to judge them on their character and the company they keep.

Both propose constitutional changes to curb the politics of personality and restore investor confidence in this country.

Well, Magadia is a little confused about the placement of cart and horse. It is not that the candidates offer no platforms, leaving the voters to choose only between their relative personal virtues rather than their relative visions for the country. It is that the voters demand no platforms, leaving the candidates to pitch only their relative personal virtues rather than their relative visions for the country.

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has been a resolute pitcher of, well, image, lacking as she does both personality and platform. That is attested to not just by the show-biz folk she has in tow in her campaign but by that she herself has gone the show-biz route. As I keep saying, she topped the senatorial race in 1995 after finishing close to last in 1992, through the simple expedient of transforming herself from the Diosdado Macapagal of Philippine globalization to the Nora Aunor of Philippine elections. She did go to the wake of Rico Yan, a teenage movie idol, instead of Lucio San Pedro, a national artist.

I can't say I blame her entirely. You have voters demanding celebrities or movie stars, candidates will try to be celebrities or movie stars. Or worse, as is happening now, candidates will be celebrities and movie stars. Having power and money on top of fame and money is nice work if you can get it, and now more than ever celebrities and movie stars can get it. In GMA's particular case though, the voters are right to demand character in lieu of platform. She can always unravel the most sublime vision for the country, but the question is, why in God's name should anyone believe her?

But my bigger unhappiness with the way the issue of politics of personality is talked about, particularly in the context of economic prospects, is that it invariably goes on to blame the *masa* for it. It's the *masa* who are presumed to be most afflicted by it, who can be duped so easily into voting for entertainers, who turn the disease into a plague. That is implicit in Magadia's and Habito's call for rectifying things to restore investor confidence in this country. You would think the investors had nothing to do with the problem.

To an extent, of course, it is true. It's the *masa* who are prone to vote for Erap and FPJ, for movie stars and entertainers. But why should we expect them to act differently? There is reason to it too, there is method in the madness. To begin with, as I keep asking, why must we expect people we keep in a state of destitution and ignorance to suddenly make enlightened and responsible decisions once every three years? That doesn't make sense.

But infinitely more than that, why should they embrace platforms, particularly economic platforms, for dear life? The *masa* have not lacked for leaders who have done so, chief of them Ferdinand Marcos, and look where it got them. In fact, they have reached a pass where they would rather have a simpleton with a heart of gold than a clever man with a heart of lead. Each time they hear economic platform, they hear only the clinking of coins in the coffers of their employers and the corresponding groans of their hungry children. So far platforms have meant to them losing their jobs (globalization), losing their land (free markets) and losing the food on their table (no more subsidy for rice).

At best, economic platforms are an abstraction to the *masa*, at worst, they are a threat to them. You are a dirt-poor farmer in Aparri or Jolo or a mangy scavenger in Payatas or Smokey Mountain, whom would you rather root for, someone who talks to you about "economic fundamentals" or someone who tells you he understands you and will fight for you? While at that, "economic fundamentals" themselves do not reside in the region of rationality, they reside in the region of myth, an incantation or mantra economists in this country recite to suggest they know the way out of the mess they've created. It's not, and they don't.

That brings us to one last but most important point, which is that it isn't the *masa* alone who are responsible for the problem. Business is too, the Church is too, media are too, most institutions of this country are too. Of course, most of them are not directly responsible for the politics of personality in one sense, which is that they do not particularly care about someone being charming, they care about someone protecting their interests.

Chief of them, business. Among the first to support Marcos when he declared martial law was business, fighting him only much later when he began poaching on their turf. To this day, many businessmen are not loath to support authoritarian rule, particularly one that forbids strikes, guarantees profits and cracks down on "troublemakers." It wasn't just the *masa* that supported Erap during the last presidential elections, a good deal of the business community did too. In this country, investors invest above all in power. That is how they do business.

Restore investor confidence? I don't know that elections ever drove it away.

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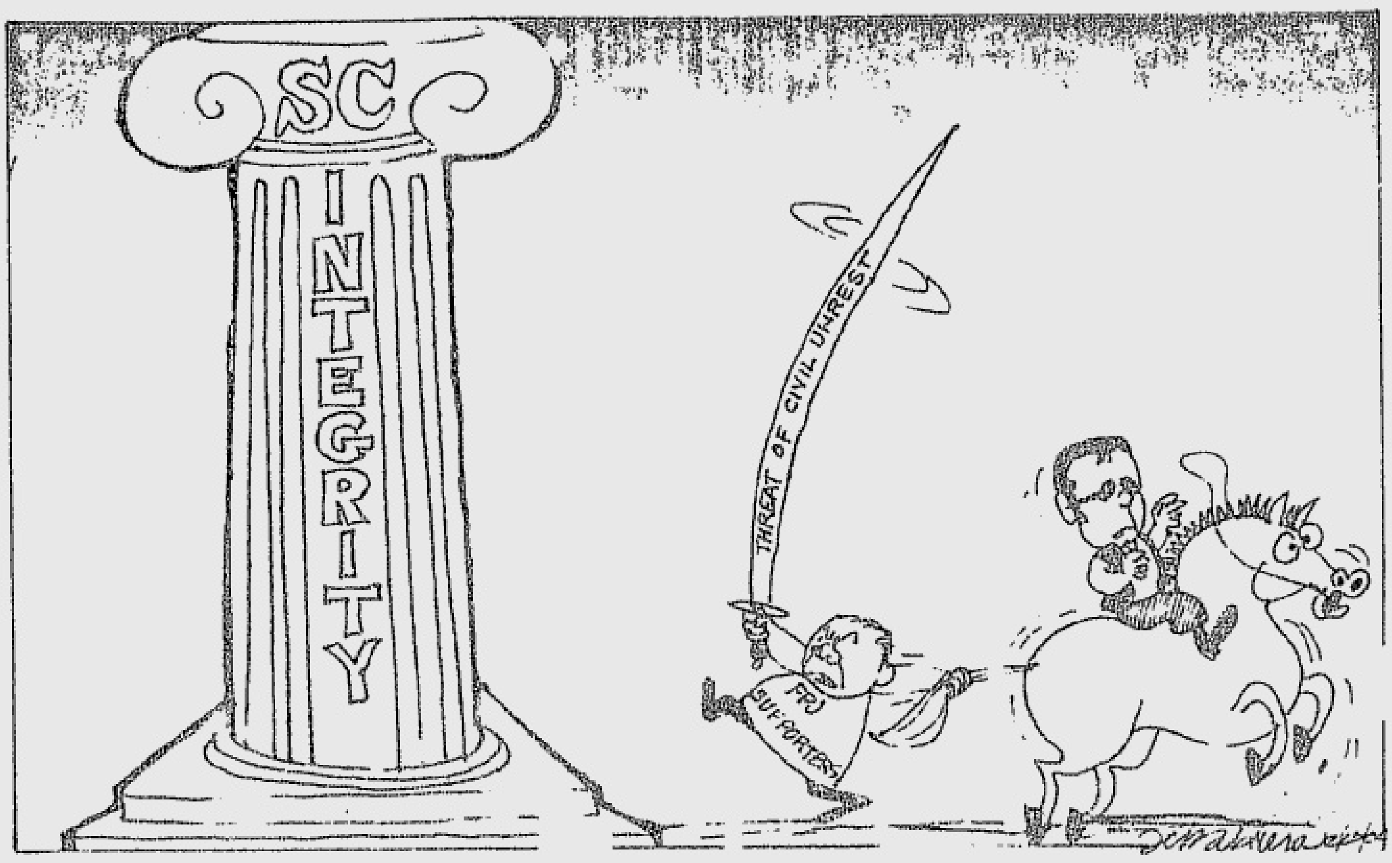

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Thus, the Mindoro imperial pigeon, Sulu hornbill and Mindanao parrotfinch, among others, vanished. Of 200 native species, 89 are threatened.

"Your children will no longer thrill, [illegible] once did, to the heart stopping dive of [illegible] hawk," National Scientist Dioscoro Umali told UP graduating students just before his death.

"We've stripped the land of [illegible]," [illegible] said. "And the bitter tragedy is: the victims are our grandchildren—flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone."

Yet, the Philippines is a "mega-diversity nation," notes the UN's latest State of Environment in Asia and the Pacific. It's wedged in the top seven (of 17) countries that "collectively claim more than two-thirds of the earth's biological resources." The Philippines and Australia top Indonesia in number of "endemic" [illegible] native birds.

No less than 77 species of egrets, plovers and sandpipers make a stopover in Cebu, [illegible] they traverse the East Asian Migratory Flyway to flee winter. Olango Island provides "pit stops" for 67 percent of these transients.

Today, the Philippines is a "bio-diversity hot spot" -one of the region's 12. This strip extends from Indian Ocean islands, Eastern Himalayas to Sri Lanka. Many endemic species face extinction within this belt.

"Deforestation saw [illegible] number of bird species disappear from Cebu, Negros, Panay and Mindoro," the UN study notes. "Of highest priority for conservation are Indonesia's Lower Sunda, Eastern Himalayas, Luzon [illegible] especially Mindoro," it adds.

On an Ulaan Bator hilltop, I watched hawks swoop from clear Mongolian skies. Childhood memories of hawks swooping to snatch chicks in outlying barrios resurfaced.

"My grandchildren never saw this," I mumbled. "And they're poorer for the loss."

The Master from Galilee used the image of a hen, sheltering chicks, to underscore the "time of visitation."

Birds perform multiple tasks: from curbing insect infestations to scattering seeds. In the shrinking North Negros Forest Reserve, 20 percent of trees will fail to regenerate, if the present rate [illegible] hunting continues, a University of British Columbia study notes.

Like rivers, birds make up a unique and sensitive early warning system. When rivers dry up, or birds disappear, they signal that "the environment [illegible] under such stress that species which lived in them for thousands of years, can no longer survive," the Philippines Red Data Book notes.

The graybird and flower-pecker (dicaeum quadricolor) were unique to Cebu. They've been wiped out and are now numbered among "feathered desparecidos."

Cebu Daily News' mascot is the endangered black shama or siloy.

But "I haven't seen a siloy," columnist Roy Lu wrote. "Worse, I have seen other birds that will never sing again : the tukmo, kukuk..."

World Conservation Union surveys in 1992, 1994 and 1996 found : "Concentration of endangered birds is larger in islands like Hawaii, the Philippines, Indonesia or Mauritius."

Island birds are smaller in number and range. They become vulnerable when forests, as in Mindanao, are razed, or rivers like Abra are laced with toxic chemicals and human waste.

In Cebu's Guadalupe river, coliform pollution exploded by 6,000 percent within a four-year period– a candidate for the Guinness Book of Records.

Complacency stems from greed, indifference and ignorance. Used to past abundance, many assume "there's more where they came from." Well, there's none.

But no bird, herb or fish disappears alone, Oxford University's Dr. Norman Meyer warns. When they go, so do their unique genes—life building blocks.

Genes are spliced into "miracle rice," high-yielding corn, even Dolly the sheep. Other go into drugs against cancer, AIDS, etc. No one knows what may be needed the day after.

This "killing curve" of species is genetic forfeiture. It seals off little-understood options for our grandchildren. Loss of species is irreversible obliteration of unique life forms. No one has yet invented recall from annihilation. Extinction is forever.

"And what is there to life if a man cannot hear the lonely cry of the whippoorwill?" asks the mythical Chief Seattle. "If all the (birds) were gone, men would die from a great loneliness of spirit."

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Confidence men

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THE ECONOMIC woes of this country, say Fr Jose Magadia of the Ateneo Center for Social Policy and former Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Cielito Habito, owe to the politics of personality. The voters are easily swayed by song and dance rather than fact and figure. "The reality," says Habito, "is that everything boils down to a choice between personalities." Magadia agrees: "It is noticeable that no detailed and comprehensive plans have really been taken by the presidential candidates." Because the candidates do not offer any program, the voters are left to judge them on their character and the company they keep.

Both propose constitutional changes to curb the politics of personality and restore investor confidence in this country.

Well, Magadia is a little confused about the placement of cart and horse. It is not that the candidates offer no platforms, leaving the voters to choose only between their relative personal virtues rather than their relative visions for the country. It is that the voters demand no platforms, leaving the candidates to pitch only their relative personal virtues rather than their relative visions for the country.

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has been a resolute pitcher of, well, image, lacking as she does both personality and platform. That is attested to not just by the show-biz folk she has in tow in her campaign but by that she herself has gone the show-biz route. As I keep saying, she topped the senatorial race in 1995 after finishing close to last in 1992, through the simple expedient of transforming herself from the Diosdado Macapagal of Philippine globalization to the Nora Aunor of Philippine elections. She did go to the wake of Rico Yan, a teenage movie idol, instead of Lucio San Pedro, a national artist.

I can't say I blame her entirely. You have voters demanding celebrities or movie stars, candidates will try to be celebrities or movie stars. Or worse, as is happening now, candidates will be celebrities and movie stars. Having power and money on top of fame and money is nice work if you can get it, and now more than ever celebrities and movie stars can get it. In GMA's particular case though, the voters are right to demand character in lieu of platform. She can always unravel the most sublime vision for the country, but the question is, why in God's name should anyone believe her?

But my bigger unhappiness with the way the issue of politics of personality is talked about, particularly in the context of economic prospects, is that it invariably goes on to blame the *masa* for it. It's the *masa* who are presumed to be most afflicted by it, who can be duped so easily into voting for entertainers, who turn the disease into a plague. That is implicit in Magadia's and Habito's call for rectifying things to restore investor confidence in this country. You would think the investors had nothing to do with the problem.

To an extent, of course, it is true. It's the *masa* who are prone to vote for Erap and FPJ, for movie stars and entertainers. But why should we expect them to act differently? There is reason to it too, there is method in the madness. To begin with, as I keep asking, why must we expect people we keep in a state of destitution and ignorance to suddenly make enlightened and responsible decisions once every three years? That doesn't make sense.

But infinitely more than that, why should they embrace platforms, particularly economic platforms, for dear life? The *masa* have not lacked for leaders who have done so, chief of them Ferdinand Marcos, and look where it got them. In fact, they have reached a pass where they would rather have a simpleton with a heart of gold than a clever man with a heart of lead. Each time they hear economic platform, they hear only the clinking of coins in the coffers of their employers and the corresponding groans of their hungry children. So far platforms have meant to them losing their jobs (globalization), losing their land (free markets) and losing the food on their table (no more subsidy for rice).

At best, economic platforms are an abstraction to the *masa*, at worst, they are a threat to them. You are a dirt-poor farmer in Aparri or Jolo or a mangy scavenger in Payatas or Smokey Mountain, whom would you rather root for, someone who talks to you about "economic fundamentals" or someone who tells you he understands you and will fight for you? While at that, "economic fundamentals" themselves do not reside in the region of rationality, they reside in the region of myth, an incantation or mantra economists in this country recite to suggest they know the way out of the mess they've created. It's not, and they don't.

That brings us to one last but most important point, which is that it isn't the *masa* alone who are responsible for the problem. Business is too, the Church is too, media are too, most institutions of this country are too. Of course, most of them are not directly responsible for the politics of personality in one sense, which is that they do not particularly care about someone being charming, they care about someone protecting their interests.

Chief of them, business. Among the first to support Marcos when he declared martial law was business, fighting him only much later when he began poaching on their turf. To this day, many businessmen are not loath to support authoritarian rule, particularly one that forbids strikes, guarantees profits and cracks down on "troublemakers." It wasn't just the *masa* that supported Erap during the last presidential elections, a good deal of the business community did too. In this country, investors invest above all in power. That is how they do business.

Restore investor confidence? I don't know that elections ever drove it away.

FVR lectures FPJ on pitfalls of presidency

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

I'M glad that finally, after being goaded by various groups into disclosing his stand about his possible disqualification by the Supreme Court on account of the citizenship issue, Fernando Poe Jr. has said he would abide by its decision, whatever it is. The next thing is for FPJ to rein in those old politicians seeking to ride on his popularity to make a comeback as well as his lawyer Estelito Mendoza who have been threatening civil unrest if he were to be disqualified. I am particularly dismayed at the rabble-rousing utterances of former Sen. Francisco Tatad, who ought to know better, as well as those of Mendoza, who is a sworn officer of the law.

* * *

Many citizens are dismayed at the opposition's threat to foment civil disturbance if FPJ is disqualified. Star columnist Teddy Benigno hit it on the head when he said that all these threats only show that the opposition is not worthy of capturing Malacañang.

I am also glad that Supreme Court deputy administrator and spokesperson Ismael Khan asserted that the Court would not be cowed by the opposition's threats. This is reassuring, but I think the lawyers' groups can help clarify this disqualification issue by explaining it in terms that the *masa* can understand because they are the ones the opposition seeks to manipulate.

* * *

FPJ is doubtless popular with the *masa*, but what his backers don't say is that half of winning lies in organization, which he does not have. For instance, at the PMA alumni homecoming, I had a brief chat with Lakas Rep. Maurice Domogan who was undefeated as three-term Baguio City mayor, and he predicted that President Macapagal-Arroyo would win in his city. Domogan's people are bringing the campaign to the grassroots. In a recent meeting with the city's barangay chairs, he said, 90 percent expressed support for GMA because she had done a lot for Baguio City. Down payment *pa lang 'yon*, they said.

* * *

I heard former Pangasinan Rep. Ranjit Shahani, who has joined the FPJ camp along with his mother, former Sen. Letty Shahani, opining that his uncle, former President Fidel Ramos, would abandon GMA and join the FPJ camp, too. But all indications are to the contrary and I cannot see that happening—not especially after FVR's statements about FPJ's lack of qualifications as well as because he is chair emeritus of Lakas and head of its council of advisers. In fact, at the PMA homecoming last weekend, FVR and GMA were seen chatting amicably. I learned that it was FVR who advised her to show up at PMA, and he motored there, too, because she would be there.

* * *

An official close to FVR relates that FPJ had gone to visit Ramos twice already, the latest at FVR's Urban Bank penthouse office, after FPJ's proclamation. It seems that FPJ wanted to know what sort of job the presidency is. FVR replied that the presidency is so tough a job that the president has to be an "expert juggler" not of just two or three balls, but perhaps of 10 to 15 national issues a day. In addition, he has to do the juggling while trying to keep his balance while riding a bicycle on a high wire.

Someone who heard this account quipped, "*Kahit na sino, may pidal din pala.*" Obviously, FVR wanted to discourage FPJ from seeking this very tough job, but FPJ didn't feel daunted by FVR's scary scenario.

* * *

Considered by the K-4 camp as a coup is its recruitment of veteran political strategist Paul Aquino to help in the GMA campaign. Aquino, brother of the late Ninoy Aquino, recently replaced Sergio Apostol as president and chief executive officer of the Energy Development Corp., the major subsidiary of Philippine National Oil Corp. where Aquino served as director earlier. In this election, as in the past, the Aquinos are again divided. While former President Cory Aquino has publicly said she wouldn't campaign for any particular presidential candidate, her daughter, actress Kris Aquino, is campaigning for GMA together with irrepressible TV host Boy Abunda. Cory's only son, LP stalwart and Tarlac Rep. Noynoy Aquino, is also helping GMA campaign in Central Luzon. Paul Aquino's sister, TV directress Lupita Kashiwahara, is handling GMA's projection on the campaign trail, but their other sister, Sen. Tessie Oreta, who's not running for reelection, is deeply involved in the FPJ campaign, helping to raise funds and managing the home base. Their brother Butz is very deeply involved in the campaign of Sen. Panfilo Lacson and their step-uncle, former Tarlac Rep. Hermie Aquino, is the vice-presidential candidate of Raul Roco.

* * *

The colorful solicitor general of the Cory era, Francisco Chavez, who is now running as a candidate in Roco's senatorial line-up, faxed a reaction to my comment that Sen. Rodolfo Biazon took a "pragmatic stand" when he left Roco's coalition and allied with K-4 as a Liberal. Roco has accused Biazon of having been offered a P30-million bribe, which the senator hotly denies. Chavez says Biazon is not a "political butterfly" but a "dragonfly," or "*tutubi*." He says "*tutubi*" is a bastardization of the classic Shakespearean hesitation, "To be or not to be." Biazon personifies this, Chavez adds, for "he is the only senatorial candidate who, in a span of less than three months, has darted and flitted about from the LDP to the Alyansa ng Pag-asa, to the Liberal Party and finally to the Lakas K-4." So, says Chavez, "For Pong, it's *tutubi* or not *tutubi*, although quo vadis also applies."

How deep will Malaysia's anti-graft drive go?

NEWS ANALYSIS

Patrick Chalmers

KUALA LUMPUR—An anti-graft campaign by Malaysia's new prime minister is worrying businessmen and fellow politicians but he is unlikely to dig too deep for fear of upsetting powerful vested interests.

But analysts say Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's moves are sending a clear message for business and politics to clean up their act, a favorite investor theme after decades of accusations of graft leveled at the previous administration.

His campaign should prove a vote winner in elections months or even weeks away. Some rural ethnic Malays, a key vote bank, have been impressed in the past by Islamic opposition taunts of government corruption.

But few think the new man will push too hard. "I don't think there's going to be a witch hunt because God knows what the cat might bring in," Standard Chartered economist Joseph Tan said from Singapore. "It sends a message to all those people who have considerable clout in business and politics to tighten up their acts—it's like a hanging at the gates."

Opposition members, while welcoming Abdullah's efforts, question how far he can go in a country where political and business figures have mixed with ease for decades.

An official and a former top businessman appeared in court this week accused of graft, the cases coming three months since Abdullah took office.

In that time he has pledged a crackdown on red tape, launched a commission into police corruption and carried out spot checks in person at selected ministries.

His actions are a far cry from the image of the unremarkable but reliable deputy he cultivated before taking the top job from Mahathir Mohamad.

> Since October, Abdullah has also targeted high-powered deals brokered during Mahathir's time

Abdullah said prosecutors acted on their own initiative in arresting the former head of Malaysia's state-controlled Perwaja Steel and charging him with criminal breach of trust.

Eric Chia Eng Hock, the firm's wheelchair-bound former chief, pleaded not guilty on Tuesday, posting bail for a trial due to start in August.

The prime minister's friends were quick to credit him for bringing to a head a complex cross-border investigation into Perwaja that dragged on for years under Mahathir.

The first arrest of a serving minister under Abdullah followed on Thursday. Minister of Land and Cooperative Development Kasitah Gaddam pleaded not guilty to two counts of corruption, securing bail for a trial to be fixed at a later date.

Opposition veteran Lim Kit Siang wondered whether others might be brought to book and challenged Abdullah's fellow ministers to endorse the prime minister's efforts. "Will all big fishes be prosecuted without fear or favor, or is there a new selective pick and choose in the prosecution of big fishes?" he asked in a statement on Thursday.

Since October, Abdullah has also targetted high-powered deals brokered during Mahathir's time. He scrapped the award of a multi-billion-dollar rail deal and the privatization of a hydropower dam to Mahathir favorite Syed Mokhtar Albukhary. Abdullah cited budget concerns.

Mahathir faced accusations of cronyism during his 22-year rule when he handpicked businessmen to push through ambitious industrialization plans, including the failed Perwaja venture. He always robustly defended the approach, which fast-tracked Malays and ethnic Chinese to the top of business empires, saying Malaysia needed to move fast to build the infrastructure and export muscle to compete internationally.

But the rush to develop, allied with the political and business trade-offs of a multi-racial coalition in power since the 1950s, was always likely to see some ventures founder and corners cut.

A Kuala Lumpur political analyst, who declined to be identified, said Abdullah could not and would not preside over the wholesale clear-out of a system built up over decades, particularly as elections loomed. "That would be shooting yourself in the leg," he said. *—Reuters*

The Huluga archaeological site

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper

IF it's any consolation, there appears to be more awareness lately of the heritage the Filipino is losing for various reasons. When you have officials, for instance, implying that the walls of Intramuros and colonial stone churches are symbols of oppression, it is hardly surprising that there wouldn't be any particular desire to preserve these structures. On the contrary, one should demolish them and build anew. As a matter of fact, one wonders why we bother to keep the Catholic religion considering that it was introduced by those nasty friars (at least that's the message I got from the Department of Tourism's Light and Sound exhibit) to induce the people to put up with suffering.

Whether the district of Malate was the first American subdivision in the Philippines and in the Orient and therefore a landmark urban development hardly matters when its main thoroughfare was named after the American governor general who believed in Filipino independence. His name and the names of the states of the Union had to be obliterated obviously not to remind us that we were ever colonized. Even if the former Taft Avenue is in a state of disrepair and ugly as they come and one has to be hard pressed to understand why it would be a compliment to have it renamed in your honor, the point is the Senate voted to alter the name to Diokno.

So be it. In effect, do what you want. At this point when the economy is in the state it's in and the balance of payment is a disaster, with skilled Filipinos making a bee-line to get the hell out of here, and our dear senators cannot seem to come up with any other project but to alter street names, what more can anybody say?

Thus, one gets the impression that it is important for some of us to erase traces of the past colonizers whether these be names of streets or structures. These at least would be understandable if it were sincere. On the other hand, what about the obliteration of our pre-colonial past? Under what category does that fall? We can hardly blame that on patriotism or nationalism or whatever other isms may be available.

In one of those interminable meetings I sit through, a report came into my hands that underscores the utter disregard for whatever past the Filipino may have. It seems that in 1999, Mayor Vicente Y. Emano (who appears to have remained in power just about forever) decided to bulldoze the Huluga site to construct a P635-million road and bridge project. Now Huluga, according to the friar chroniclers in 1622, was the home of the original natives of Cagayan de Oro and vicinities. It is a declared archaeological site composed of caves and an open site which was a venue of a prehistoric fortified village once populated by 500 residents. A female cranium found in one of the caves was dated AD 377. Also found were pots, stone and metal instruments, Chinese pottery fragments and obsidian flakes of unknown origin.

Emano's project was stopped by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources on the protests of the Heritage Conservation Advocates of Cagayan de Oro. By the usual underhanded methods, the cease and desist order was lifted, without the knowledge naturally of the HCA, and the project continued in 2002 even if it had no Archaeological Impact Assessment as required by law.

As some people have pointed out, we can't just conserve things and remain in the *calesa* stage; one must progress. By the time the HCA discovered the desecration, 60 to 80 percent of the open site had been destroyed. But even surface examination uncovered earthenware, pottery shards and some other artifacts from the damaged site, including a whale harpoon similar "to those being used in Lomblen Island, near Australia."

Members of the HCA filed a case against Emano and the contractor, UKC Builders, before the Environmental Management Board in July 2003. Didn't help; the project continued and was inaugurated by Emano in September.

The HCA asked help from President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, from the Department of Tourism, the National Museum, the 4th Infantry Division of the Armed Forces of the Philippines—all to no avail. The National Museum is rumored to be preparing to file an administrative case, but this would be a case of too little, too late, as usual.

Both Senators Loren Legarda and Aquilino Pimentel Jr. promised to help. Legarda even proposed a resolution calling for yet another Senate investigation (somebody spare me) on Huluga but nothing has come out of that either.

HCA members have consulted with presidential advisers Luis Lorenzo and Nikki Coseteng. Chin-Chin Gutierrez, named by Time Magazine as one of Asia's new environmental heroes, declined to visit the area when she went to Cagayan.

Ironically enough, the President delivered a speech in Paris on Sept. 23, 2003 praising Unesco's efforts in preserving Philippine cultural heritage. This was one day before Emano inaugurated the P635-million road and bridge project.

Do you still wonder why we're rudderless?

Pillow talk

YOUNG BLOOD

Hershey

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

WHEN you've been single for close to an eternity, like I've been, you can't help but long for that special person to come along. A person who'll hold your hand as you cross the street, listen (or at least pretend to) to you as you gripe about your day, give you a lift when your car goes kaput, eat lunch with you on your break or tenderly kiss you for no particular reason.

Now on my 25th year of singlehood, I'm also an expectant mother who lies in bed alone at night, tightly clutching a non-requiting, unresponsive feather pillow to my bosom. I figure all this practice might just pay off, as a living, breathing person could hug me back one day.

How did I end up almost seven months on the way, without a husband and not even a boyfriend in sight? In a nutshell, my naivete about life and love is to blame. You see, when you're the youngest of five sisters and about seven years younger than the sister before you, you become highly impressionable and learn to take cues from your big sisters. They become your resource persons for anything and everything—from periods and brassiere size to first kiss and first base. And when you witness each sister go through the same process of entertaining suitors, turning down candidates, picking out the one, getting engaged and eventually getting hitched, you anticipate those events to take place in your own life in the same exact order.

That's when expectation collided with reality. For starters, I didn't get suitors even when I was past puberty, probably owing to the fact that I was the studious, spectacle-wearing type who attended an exclusive Catholic girls' school. Since I was neither the cheerleading nor beauty pageant-joining kind in high school, boys didn't pay much attention to me at soirees and school fairs. Case in point: the boy who volunteered to escort me to our JS prom kept pining for my dolled-up lesbian classmate the whole night we were together!

In college when I started to bloom physically, I could've contented myself with my satisfactory academic performance, burgeoning popularity among my peers and colorful non-academic life. But no, I had to let envy get the best of me and cloud my perspective. I envied the sister whose boyfriend baked apple bars with her in our kitchen every weekend. I envied a block mate whose boyfriend dropped her off at school every morning. I envied my best friend who was having a new romance. In short, I envied anyone with a significant other or who was in my eyes desired and sought after. I, too, wanted to be wooed and be another's significant other.

The first looker who wined, dined and brought me roses became my first boyfriend only after a month-long courtship. As we were both neophytes in the relationship business, our romance fizzled in a matter of two months. I was devastated and totally regretful over the defunct affair. After all, he was such a good catch.

After three years of harping on about the could-have-been's with Mr. Cutie, I jumped into a relationship headfirst with another big fish who was four years my junior. Mr. Big and I set a new record for shortest-lived relationship (if you can call it that): two weeks.

With loneliness as an ubiquitous presence in my life, I got caught in a vicious cycle of entering relationships, overlooking the importance of getting to know the person first. Two more relationships later, I fell deeply in love, for the first time, with the boy who would father my child.

And how I loved him. My mantra was, "By hook or by crook I will follow through." Although he wasn't an alumnus of my university but a graduate of the college across the street, I wrongly assumed that he would continue to treat me well. We, after all, did have a "common" Catholic education. After leading me to believe that he loved and cared for me, he broke my heart enough times to catapult me to depression.

Admittedly, I was a love fool. Even as we broke up twice during our six-month relationship, I gave him a second chance... and a third chance. Our most recent reconciliation irrevocably sealed my fate as mother at age 25.

As any discerning person would be able to predict, he reverted to his old, hurtful ways. Before we both learned about my pregnancy, I had already broken up with him.

Ever unreliable and utterly irresponsible, the former object of my affection still pussyfoots where his paternal duties are concerned. Recently he informed me that he is seeing someone new. Not immediately acknowledging his paternity, he once had the temerity to accuse me of sleeping with other guys, mostly admirers whom I started to attract in my early 20s (where have you guys been hiding?).

As I struggled to swallow the bitter truth that he'll never be there for me, I was an emotional wreck and an open wound. Another guy, who passed himself off as a knight in shining armor, entered my life only to deal me another serious blow. Fully aware of my condition, he introduced me to his family and misled my friends about his intentions for me. Mr. Bail-out left me hanging after a month with nary a good-bye. (Incidentally, he's also from the college across the street.)

Raw and vulnerable after those harrowing experiences, I would have hanged myself or slashed my wrists like any respectable depressive would. Fortunately, the Lord helped me veer off the path of self-destruction, thanks to an earnest talk with a renewed Christian friend.

It's been two months since my spiritual renewal and last bout with depression. I now forge on for my unborn baby's sake.

As for my pillow, it still gets drenched with tears and impulsively squashed whenever loneliness strikes. Although that still happens sometimes, prayer consoles me on those lonely nights. Because now I know by faith that it won't be long until God sends me a living, breathing, loving person to hug me back.

Hershey, 25, has sworn off guys who hail from the college across the street (unless of course the guy is God-sent).

THEY SAID

Caused by politics

"This is a political problem and not economic."

—Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Gov. Rafael Buenaventura, rejecting suggestions that the BSP intervene to stop the peso's fall

Opportunity

"There's only so much you can do, but if somebody doesn't give you a chance there is nothing you can do."

—Actress Charlize Theron, thanking her director who gave her the role that won for her an acting award from the Golden Globes

How reliable are the poll surveys

IN ACADEMIC circles, statistics has always been considered a dismal science. The latest poll survey of the Social Weather Station, showing 36 percent likely to vote for FPJ, 27 percent for GMA, 19 percent for Roco, and 11 percent for Lacson, presents a configuration based on purely statistical trends. In the realm of probabilities, this 16-22 January SWS survey is deemed passé, even useless as a frame of reference for political wannabes. In short, as soon as the survey results are out, the next poll configuration has dramatically changed. The only conceivable value of surveys is to "condition" the minds of the voting public.

Ironically, the voting public, if the SWS survey is any barometer, is too patronizing for the comfort of FPJ for reasons known only to the *masa* in our Great Cultural Divide. The *masa* can be viewed as a sociological phenomenon in our national life because those that constitute them happen to be the less educated, the less productive, the less intelligent. Living as they are in hand-to-mouth existence, they are easily prostituted to sell their votes for a few hundreds of pesos. It is difficult to reengineer this social mind-set that looks up to FPJ as if he were manna from heaven. Thus, Philippine society, almost always, cannot have the president and leaders it rightfully deserves.

Surveys do not necessarily have a one-to-one correspondence with reality. This means that there is a world of distinction between an apparent winner in a survey and a real winner by actual vote count in an election. Pollsters are even referred to as "push-polling circuits" since there is a growing perception that they can produce results to suit their sponsor's expectation.

—PRIMER C. PAGUNURAN,
UP Diliman, Quezon City

Ensuring quality health and life by family planning

THIS is in reaction to your editorial cartoon last Feb. 8, 2004 by Mr. Jess Abrera.

Though not explicitly expressed, just as many of his previous cartoons, it was an attack to pro-population management and reproductive health advocates. The cartoon gives the impression that there is no budget to fund measures against the leading causes of death because the allocation have been allotted to population control or management.

The truth is, the Department of Health has admitted it had deliberately diverted P63 million appropriated for family planning commodities and services to buy low cost medicines. The drugs bought were for diseases such as asthma, hypertension, pneumonia and diabetes.

Another truth is the United States Agency for International Development, the country's biggest donor of contraceptives is phasing out their commodity support for the family planning program. As if it is no cause for alarm, public funds amounting to P50 million were allotted exclusively for the promotion of natural family planning, thereby displacing seven out of ten women who use modern contraceptive methods and whose supplies are being provided by government hospitals, rural health units, urban health centers and barangay health stations.

Contraceptives, like any other health commodities, such as, vitamins, preventive drugs and vaccines, are essential to couples, families and women in particular. The absence of a budget for the purchase of artificial and modern methods of family planning will be adding burden to a large sector of society who opted to be responsible parents and to plan for their family's future.

Moreover, by seeing to it that mothers are healthy, we ensure ourselves of healthy children and families. There will be less people dying from diarrhea, bronchitis, pneumonia—diseases that are preventable given proper and efficient planning and implementation of DOH programs.

The DOH statistics show that the leading cause of death among women of reproductive age is pregnancy-related and child-bearing. This is one of the most glaring reasons why a "reproductive health and rights approach" is more viable and logical than population control. It therefore follows that modern contraceptives, as safe and effective means of preventing unplanned pregnancies (which can prevent health risks and the death of thousands of women), are an indispensable component of public health care.

A comprehensive policy on reproductive health, not population control, will ensure that citizens are able to access safe, affordable and quality reproductive health services, including family planning commodities and services. Having access to quality contraceptive supplies will empower women, men, couples and families to exercise their reproductive health options in order to improve their quality of life.

—LARA C. JAVIER,
information officer, Women's Legal
Education, Advocacy and Defense
Foundation Inc., 45 Mapagkumbaba St.
Sikatuna Village, Quezon City

'Masa' vote vs thinking vote?

I DO not remember how it was worded, but years ago at the Makati Shangri-La Hotel, former Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew was a guest speaker of an important forum. Among the issues taken up was the way we elect our national leaders. I think it was mentioned that since the *masa* is the biggest sector that casts the biggest number of votes for any candidate (surpassing all other sectors), it is they who virtually send our national leaders to office. I know of course this idea of assigning sectoral percentages during election will not sit well with our *masa*, but I think this is the only way that the thinking populace can vote the qualified candidate into the presidency. I am clueless on how this process works, but the idea is for the thinking populace to vote in the right candidates, and not give away this right to those of us who are only swayed by popularity without giving importance or weight to qualifications, work background and overall fitness for the position.

—ED VALENCIANO,
enzovalen@hotmail.com

Media in elections

I PROPOSE that the media play a more important role in the coming elections to raise the level of discourse. Right now we are mired in the gimmickry and gutter language now dominating the election campaign period. And media is partly to blame for this sad state of affairs.

—NICOLO REMANDABAN, 4 New York,
Quezon City, Remandaban@hotmail.com

Presidential misfits

HER Excellency Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was one of my *ninangs* when I got married in 1998. At that time she was the vice president. These ties aside, my family and I have always regarded her as one of the more able leaders of our country. She is a no-nonsense politician who appears to be dedicated to creating a better life for our countrymen.

Alas, I wish I could say the same of some of her political appointees in government-owned or controlled corporations (GOCCs), especially those in media. Indeed, it is distressing enough to see these political appointees bungle their jobs, but more dismaying is to see them bickering, quibbling and engaging in "turf wars" like spoiled brats fighting over the proverbial bag of sweets. In the end, it is the employees of these GOCCs (and also the community) who must suffer and bear the consequences of their actions.

I may be willing to concede that appointing certain people into office as a form of political or personal concession may be a necessary evil in Philippine politics. However, I honestly believe that all political appointees should at least be screened for professional competence, and, more importantly, personal integrity—inasmuch as the former can be learned, while the latter is innate.

These people may, unbeknown to the President, are putting her in a bad light because of their shenanigans. Woe is the day when her supporters start to think twice about voting for her just because of them. I truly hope and pray that she can persuade these people to get their acts together, and convince them to sacrifice and set aside their personal ambitions/agendas for the sake of the country.

—NAME WITHHELD ON REQUEST

Farewell, Doy

SALVADOR "Doy" Laurel's death unleashed a wave of public emotion and a flood of media coverage. Doy deserved such an outpouring.

If his private life was shaped by his love for his family, his public one was shaped by his deep concern for the poor and for our nation as a whole.

This man was loved genuinely by people who didn't know him. His acts of charity were immense. He may have been all those things, as so many people now say—hero, adventurous, intelligent. Or maybe someone may come up with statements showing him to have been not exactly all those things, but it won't matter. Doy was what he needed to be.

The more one learns of his works, the things he accomplished, the more one appreciates that this is one death worth mourning for. His death is a tragedy to all Filipinos.

Now perhaps the memory of his life can serve as a light for others. His legacy will grow now that he is gone. Farewell, Doy. Till we meet again.

—GIGI SANZ,
Hans Brumann Jeweller,
Shangri-La Hotel Manila

No partners of The Firm

THIS refers to the article "Key witness in tax scam withdraws" by Clarissa S. Batino (PDI, 2/10/04) wherein Undersecretary Inocencio Ferrer Jr. and lawyer Lucito Tan are referred to as a "former senior partner" and "former partner," respectively, of the "influential Cruz and Villaraza (sic) Law Offices.

Both Undersecretary Ferrer and Tan have long completely severed their ties with our law firm. Ferrer resigned in March 2002 prior to his appointment as finance undersecretary. It must be noted that Ferrer's appointment was upon the invitation of former Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, and not upon the recommendation of our law firm.

Tan resigned as a senior associate, not partner, in December 1995 to put up his own law office.

—RAOUL R. ANGANGCO, co-managing
partner, Villaraza & Angangco Law
Offices, 5/F LTA Bldg., 118 Perea St.,
Legaspi Village, Makati City

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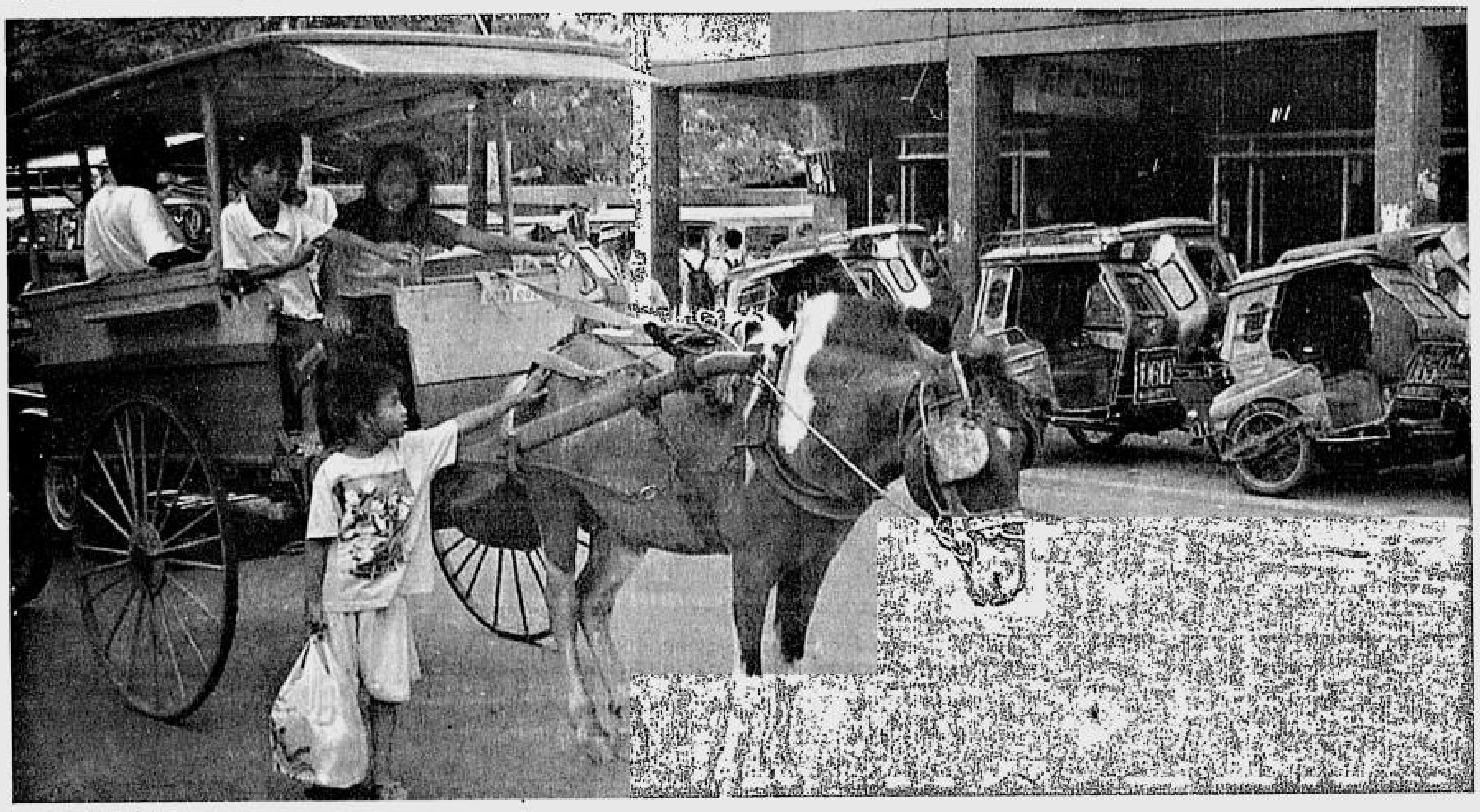

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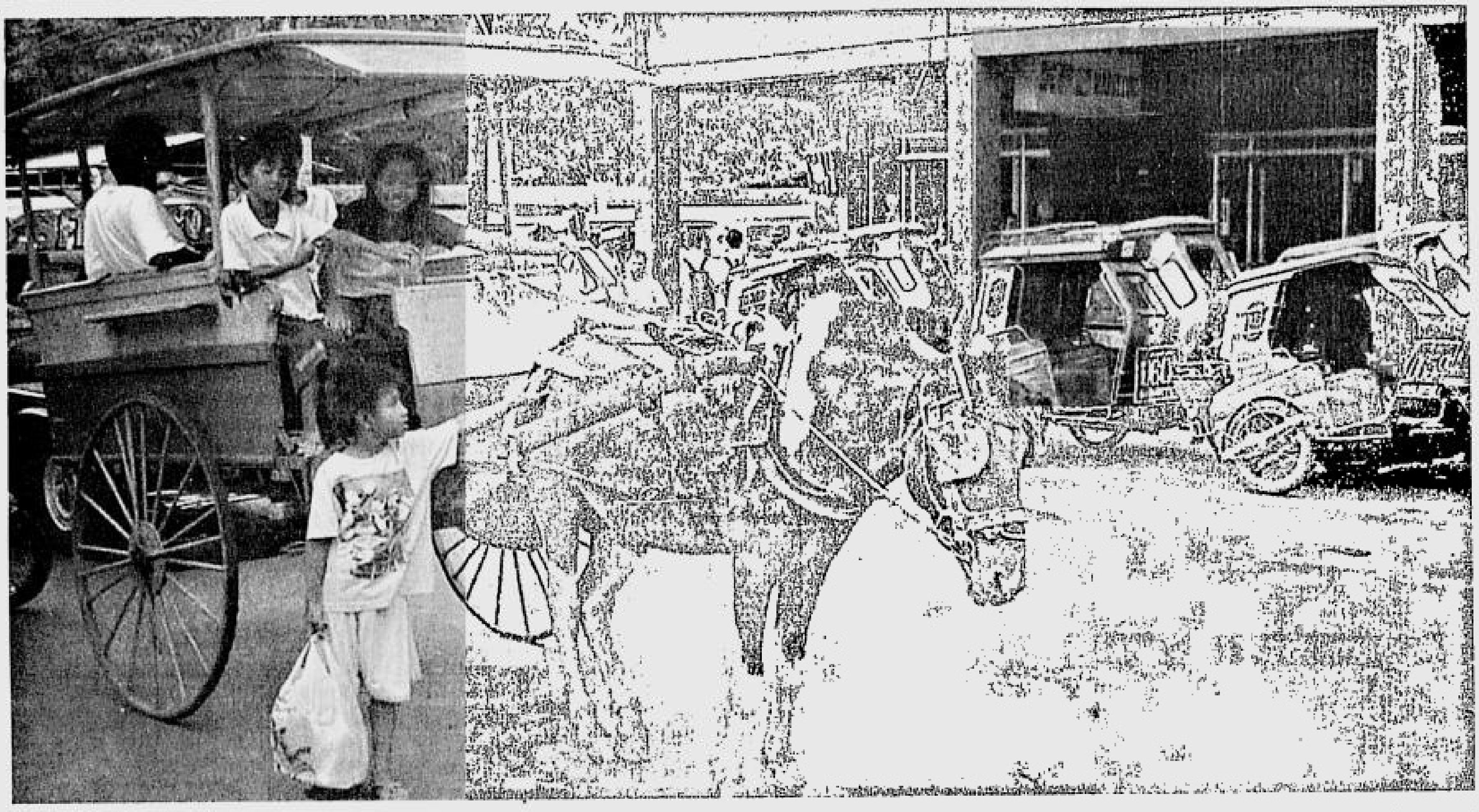

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2 new poll commissioners want Poe barred

From page A1

ing) operation in Mindanao that cost him a seat in the Senate in 1995.

Garcillano and Barcelona were named last week to replace Luzviminda Tancangco and Ralph Lantion who retired from the 7-member Comelec board on Feb. 2.

Cancel certificate

Tuason said that under the law, Poe should be disqualified because he was an illegitimate child when he was born. Garcillano and Barcelona went further and asked the tribunal to cancel Poe's certificate of candidacy.

Garcillano noted that based on the facts Poe himself admitted to, particularly on his certificate of birth and the marriage contract between his mother and father, the KNP standard-bearer was an illegitimate child.

"Being born an illegitimate child, following the doctrine in Morano vs Vivo, Poe cannot be considered a natural-born Filipino even if his father, Allan Fernando Poe is shown to be a Filipino. As an illegitimate child, Poe's citizenship would have to follow the citizenship of his mother, Bessie Kelly, whom Poe admits was an American citizen," he said in his 12-page comment.

He said that while the 1935 Constitution did not expressly distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate children, the Supreme Court, in Morano vs Vivo, has categorically ruled that when a child is born out of an unlawful marriage, "he acquires the citizenship of the only legally known parent—the mother."

"It is, therefore, a rule long settled by the Supreme Court that only legitimate children follow the citizenship of the father and that illegitimate children are under the parental authority of the mother and follow her nationality," Garcillano said.

PINOY si FPJ Campaign to Save Philippine Democracy, a coalition of various groups, is launched Monday at the Quezon City Sports Plaza. As the name implies, it is a pressure group in the runup to the hearings at the Supreme Court to decide on the citizenship of its idol. JOAN BONDOC

His and Barcelona's reasons for asking the court to disqualify Poe from the presidential race were similar to those of the petitioners.

Based on Poe's documents

Fornier had claimed that Poe was an illegitimate child based on the documents submitted by the Poe camp—the 1940 marriage certificate of Poe's parents and Poe's birth certificate, which showed that he was born in 1939.

In the 1940 marriage certificate, Fornier said Poe's father and mother claimed they were both single, but in the 1939 birth certificate they said they were already married.

Garcillano said the subsequent marriage of Poe's parents could not have transferred the citizenship of Poe's father to the actor "through the legal fiction of legitimation."

Under the country's civil laws, citizenship is not included in "the bundle of rights conferred by civil laws on children who have acquired the status of legitimate child through legal fiction," the new commissioner said.

"Thus, even if it is argued that the effects of legitimation should be made to retro-act to Poe's birth, the retroactive effect does not include the acquisition of Philippine citizenship," Garcillano said. "Consequently, it still remains that at the time of his birth, Poe was not a natural-born Filipino citizen."

Concurrence

Barcelona concurred in his 18-page comment.

"Applying this ruling (Morano vs Vivo) to the facts admitted to by respondent Poe can only lead to the conclusion that since he was born an illegitimate child, he did not acquire the Filipino citizenship of his father at birth. Hence, he is not a natural-born Filipino citizen," Barcelona said.

He added that Poe, being an illegitimate child, should follow his American mother's citizenship.

Barcelona said that under the 1935 Constitution, a natural-born Filipino citizen was defined as one who "became such at the moment of his birth" and "by reason of his birth, not by naturalization or by any subsequent declaration by the law for his citizenship."

In its comment, the Comelec denied that it had acted without jurisdiction or committed grave abuse of discretion because it passed upon Poe's citizenship only because the actor was accused of material misrepresentation.

It added that it "saw no cogent reason" for Poe's outright disqualification based on his certificate of candidacy.

Old score

In Malacañang, presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye continued to defend Garcillano, claiming that critics of the President's appointee had an old score to settle.

In a statement, Bunye said the appointment of Garcillano was "being exploited as a tool of mudslinging and an avenue for settling a personal grudge."

Although no spècific reference was made, Bunye was alluding to Pimentel, who had been vocal about his dislike for Garcillano after getting word that he would be named by the President to the Comelec.

He echoed the President's previous statement that Garcillano's critics did not have the evidence to back up their accusations.

Evidence needed

"We will not dignify this allegation unless it is substantiated by strong and concrete pieces of evidence," Garcillano said.

Supporters of Poe have warned of civil unrest if he is disqualified from running.

The Philippine National Police said it was ready to face off with supporters of Poe who had threatened to stage an "Edsa III-like" mass action in the event that the Supreme Court disqualified their idol from the presidential race.

"We are prepared, we will never be caught off-guard," said Deputy Director Virtus Gil, PNP chief for operations.

Gil said all police units, especially those in Metro Manila, had been alerted for possible mass actions to be staged by groups loyal to the veteran actor. Operational plans were also in place against protesters, he said.

He said the PNP was anything but fazed by the threat, considering that the national police had had "plenty of practice" with the likes of the Labor Day siege in 2001 and the Makati rampage last year. *With reports from Gil Cabacungan Jr. and Christian V. Esguerra*

I'm a true Filipino, FPJ insists

From page A1

cision would be adverse to him.

It was in stark contrast to his earlier veiled threat against the occupants of Malacañang whom he suspects of being behind the move to disqualify him. "They might not see the light of day," Poe had told residents of Mariveles, Bataan.

In Manila, Poe yesterday asked the Supreme Court to "unconditionally" dismiss the disqualification petition that lawyer Victorino Fornier had filed against him because the lawyer allegedly presented no material evidence to merit his disqualification.

Poe also cited the opinion of retired Supreme Court Justice Vicente Mendoza, one of the friends of the court invited to help the tribunal decide on the petition, to shore up his position that the court has no jurisdiction over the case.

"The petition deserves peremptory denial. He came before the Comelec (Commission on Elections) and now the Supreme Court with filthy hands by presenting falsified exhibits and using these as his basis for arguments," said Poe's lawyer, Estelito Mendoza.

He said the "centerpiece" of Fornier's petition was the marriage certificate of Poe Sr. to Paulita Gomez, which has been "established to be spurious, a manufactured document."

"It is quite interesting that to this date, no one has come forward to say he or she is a relative of Paulita Gomez. A person married to a famous actor would at least have friends or surviving relatives who know of her marriage to Poe Sr.," Mendoza said.

Legitimacy

He said the Comelec decision that dismissed Fornier's disqualification case against Poe was "very clear" when it found "no material misrepresentation" on the part of Poe when he filed his certificate of candidacy (COC).

"(Poe) believes he is a natural-born Filipino as shown in his COC. He registered and voted during elections. He was issued and used his Philippine passport. He has committed acts reserved only for Filipino citizens like owning real estate," he said.

"In all his personal and business transactions, he has clearly and consistently indicated his citizenship as Filipino," Mendoza said.

Mendoza said legitimacy was beside the point in being a Filipino. "Nowhere in the 1935, 1973 and 1987 Constitution does it say that only legitimate children are Filipinos from birth," he said.

For his part, Rep. Jacinto Paras appealed to the Supreme Court justices to live up to the glory of the past when they finally decide on the disqualification petition.

Paras said the actions of past justices were beyond reproach.

Vic and Joey

At the rally in San Carlos, the citizenship issue of Poe was not far away from the minds of the candidates of the opposition's Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino

Poe's running mate, Sen. Loren Legarda, asked the crowd whether those living in San Carlos and Pangasinan were not Filipinos.

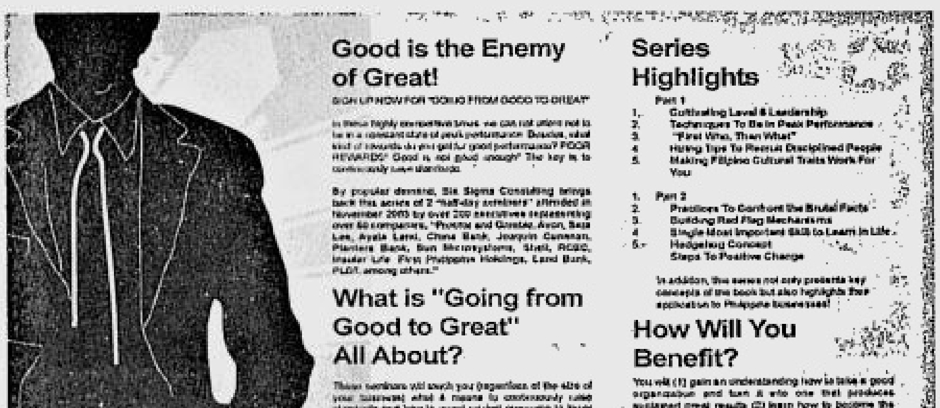
Legarda said Poe was a "true Filipino," eliciting cheers from the crowd.

Comedians and TV hosts Vic Sotto and Joey de Leon rendered a song sang to the tune of "Ako'y Isang Pinoy (I'm a Filipino)." Their chorus was: "FPJ talks little but will help the country a lot."

They ended the song with a reminder to listeners to write down "Fernando Poe" on their ballot come May 10.

Even if the rally featured other movie stars and singers, the KNP senatorial candidates were all given the chance to say their piece.

In a short speech, Poe said the government had failed to take care and defend the poor. He then introduced his long-time friend and fellow movie actor, Eddie Garcia, drawing more cheers from the crowd. *With reports from Philip C. Tubeza and Cynthia D. Balana*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Speaker
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From page A1

JOAN BONDOC

LADY on the warpath against drugs: President Macapagal launches Manibela Kontra Droga (Makondroga), which enlists the cooperation of tricycle, bus and jeepney drivers, at the Amoranto Stadium in Quezon City.

scribe the mess that we inherited is that in the three years before Edsa II made me President, the economy was only able to create one million jobs. That's why when I became President, I inherited more than four million unemployed Filipinos. But in my short administration, we have created more than three million jobs," Ms Macapagal said.

She said that generating more investments to create more jobs was the key to have food on every table. This, she added, had been her goal since she assumed power.

She thanked the IWCPI for its projects to help the poor families and credited it for lobbying for the pardon of two elderly inmates at the Correctional Institute for Women.

Drug pushers and kidnappers should be behind bars, not elderly women who should enjoy the comforts and company of their families, she said.

Empowered women

Ms Macapagal said that while the schedules of national candidates were dictated by campaign managers, she made sure that she would be in Manila to attend the IWCPI convention.

"How nice to be here among empowered and empowering women. You're empowered because you are leaders but you also empower because of your concern for the communities and the families in the communities," she said.

Later in the day, her campaign spokesperson, Housing Secretary Michael Defensor, told Malacañang reporters in a briefing that Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday would be "governance" days for the President, while the rest of the week would be her time to campaign in the provinces.

Ms Macapagal also attended the launching of the Makondroga (Manibela Kontra Droga) at the Amoranto Stadium in Quezon City yesterday afternoon.

Mass oath-taking

Thousands of tricycle, jeepney, taxi, FX, bus and truck drivers were sworn in as members of Makondroga, the government's drive against illegal drugs in the transport sector. Organizers estimated the members at 60,000. The tricycles carried "Kay Gloria Tayo" flags.

Before the mass oath-taking, Ms Macapagal witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Special Concerns and the transportation, interior and health departments, and the Dangerous Drugs Board and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency.

The government agencies agreed that Makondroga would be a vehicle in promoting a drug-free transport sector.

Ms Macapagal enjoined the transport workers to help her bring about a "drug-free 2010" for the country.

In a statement, Ms Macapagal said she was launching an anti-drug caravan throughout the country to "show our appreciation to the Filipino people for the collective support they have shown in ridding our society of this menace."

"We have cut the drug threat by more than half, dismantled 20 drug labs and warehouses, recovered 13 billion pesos worth of illegal drugs and demobilized the top producers and distributors," she said.

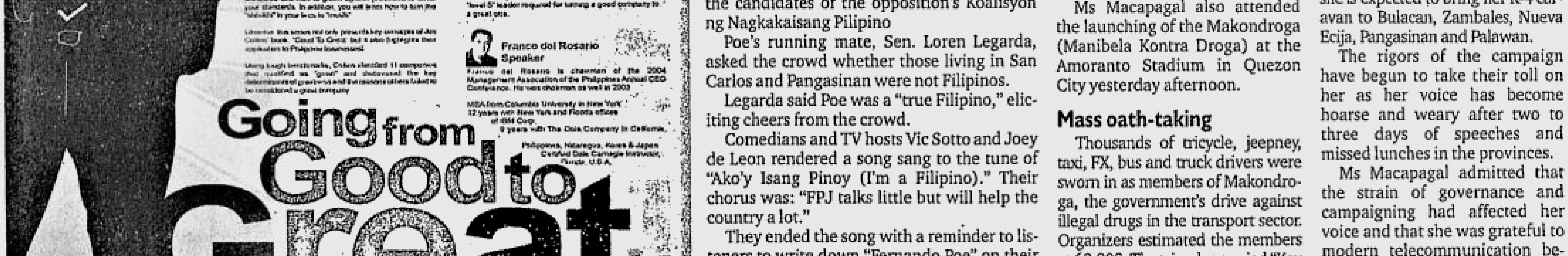
Hoarse voice

Last week, Ms Macapagal kicked off her campaign with a swing through Laguna, Tarlac, Rizal, Mindoro, Baguio and Cavite. This week, she is expected to bring her K-4 caravan to Bulacan, Zambales, Nueva Ecija, Pangasinan and Palawan.

The rigors of the campaign have begun to take their toll on her as her voice has become hoarse and weary after two to three days of speeches and missed lunches in the provinces.

Ms Macapagal admitted that the strain of governance and campaigning had affected her voice and that she was grateful to modern telecommunication because it was only through the cellular phone that she could manage things in the government while she was kilometers away from the Palace.

But Defensor stressed that Ms Macapagal was "not tired" and that she had a very "strong resistance" having had extensive experience in campaign rallies. *With a report from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*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METRO

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Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

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Transport groups want ₱1.50 hike in PUV fares

By Clarissa S. Batino

TRANSPORT groups are scheduled to submit today before the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) a fare hike bid of P1.50 for the first 5 kilometers and 35-centavos for every succeeding kilometer.

The new petition, which would consolidate varied requests from different groups, follows a strike staged by jeepney drivers and operators in Bulacan yesterday.

If approved, passengers will have to pay P5.50 instead of the current P4 for the first 5 kilometers. The last time a fare hike was granted was in 2000 when the basic fare went up by 50 centavos for the first 5 kms.

LTFRB Chair Ma. Elena Bautista said transport groups had earlier submitted varying fare hike petitions, in reaction to the increase in fuel prices.

Bautista said the consolidated petition would probably ask for a P1.50 increase for the first 5 kms. plus 35 centavos for every succeeding kilometer.

"We would have to go through a process of public hearing, after which it would be decided en banc by the Board. It is not up to me to decide on this," she said.

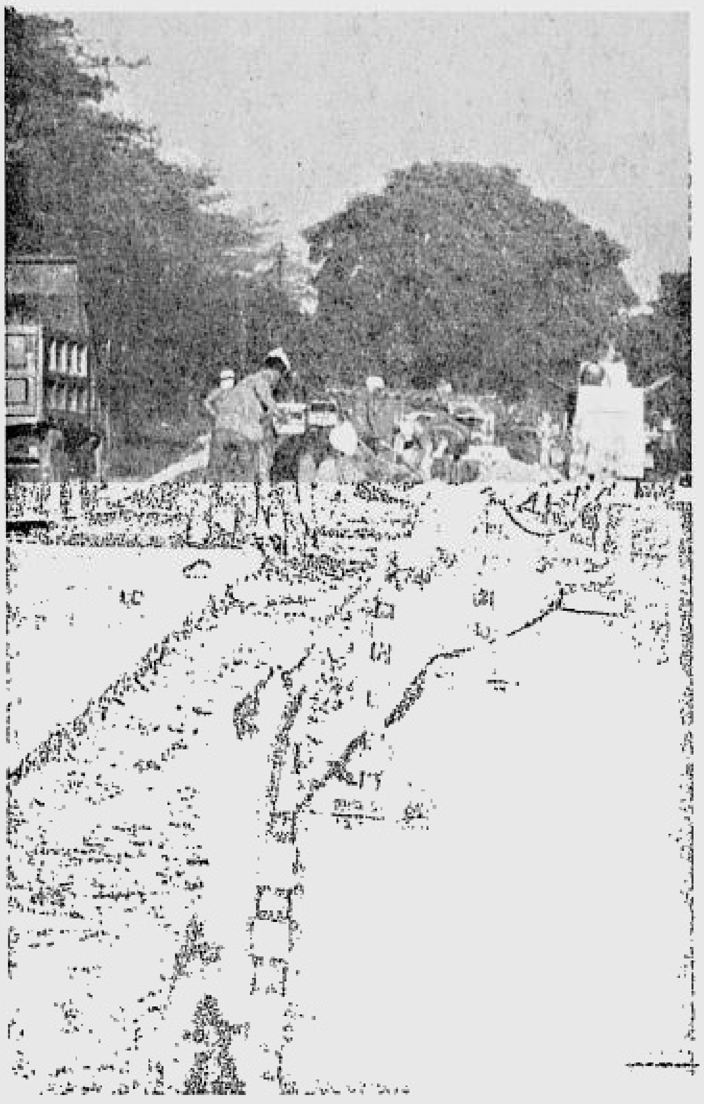
In Bulacan, classes in the province were suspended yesterday and thousands of commuters were stranded following the strike staged by jeepney operators and drivers there.

They were demanding for either a rollback in oil prices or a P1 increase in fares.

Jun Pereda, president of the Bulacan Transport Association (Batas), said they would continue their strike today to press their demand.

Affected by the strike were passengers from the province's 22 towns and two cities.

Bautista has warned the striking group against harassing other drivers and operators who would not join the strike. *With a report from Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk*



WORK crews of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority clear the center island along White Plains Road in Quezon City starting Monday in preparation for the commemoration of the bloodless revolution of 1986. RUDY ESPERAS

BF lets go of casuals

By Margaux Ortiz

METROPOLITAN Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando said he has decided not to renew the contracts of 77 messengers in order to "streamline the agency."

"We have too many messengers already," Fernando said in a press conference. "Besides, people have to put in mind that personnel hired on a casual basis could be removed anytime."

He also said that the hiring of too many casual employees results in the agency's lack of transparency.

"Some messengers even do clerical work instead of their jobs," Fernando said, stressing that the MMDA would be able to save nearly half a million in monthly wages in its recent "streamlining" efforts.

He also stressed that the "jolting" the personnel through nonrenewal of contracts would result in efficiency on the part of the casual employees.

Fernando, however, said that the employees could re-apply for other positions in the agency.

"We need to hire and re-hire people for all the right reasons," the MMDA chair said.

Good news for battered wives

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

MARIVIC Genosa, 44, has now become a model for battered wives.

Husbands who beat up their wives frequently had better beware. They risk getting killed in their sleep by their oppressed wives, and the courts may acquit their killers.

Genosa killed her husband eight years ago in Ormoc City after she could no longer bear the constant beatings she got from him when they had marital spats. She found her chance to get even while he was asleep.

The Supreme Court found justification in the killing of Mr. Genosa by Marivic, citing the "battered wife syndrome." It reversed the lower court's decision meting out the death penalty on Marivic.

The high court agreed with Marivic's lawyer, Dulce Asensi, that she was not in her right mind when she killed her husband in his sleep. Asensi said that Marivic had been physically and verbally abused by her husband for 12 years. The husband would beat up Marivic even when she was pregnant.

With Marivic's case highlighted, fewer husbands will now think twice before hitting their wives during marital quarrels. The courts now look with understanding at a battered wife who is driven to kill her husband.

* * *

There ought to be a law that punishes husbands who beat up their wives during domestic spats.

Even if the wife forgives the husband later on, he still should be punished by the State.

In short, wife-beating should no longer be a private crime but a crime against the state.

Neighbors who witnessed a husband making a punching bag of his wife, for example, could file a criminal case against him in court.

* * *

Husbands don't have any right to hit their wives for any reason at all.

I admit to having slapped my wife in the past during a severe quarrel. I now regret I did it because I had no justification whatsoever for doing it. Let me hasten to add, though, that the wife retaliated in such fury I had to run out of the house. So, the question, "Have you stopped beating your wife?" also applies to me.

Husband, no matter how unbearable your wife has become, you have no right to hit her. If you can't stand her nagging or even when she starts throwing things at you, why, leave the house and never come back!

I realize that it's unforgivable to hit your wife. I never saw my Dad lift a hand against my Mom even when my mother became unbearably nagging. I even saw my Mom slapping my Dad, who would just parry the blows while appeasing her. No kidding, my Dad was a battered husband.

Husbands who get caught being unfaithful by their wives should all the more reason be extra patient with the nagging of their wives. *Nagloloko ka na nga, mambubugbog ka pa ng iyong asawa!*

A presidential candidate should be man enough to admit that he once or twice beat up his wife during a severe quarrel. I was told that the wife was nagging him about his *querida* and his child by her.

* * *

Husbands who are *ander de saya* or henpecked are more attractive to other women.

Take it from a pretty socialite: "Men who make themselves subservient to their wives attract other women."

Men who have to make amends with their wives for some wrongdoings should especially be gentle with their spouses.

One example is First Gentleman Mike Arroyo. After being exposed by Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson for his supposed philandering with another woman, Arroyo trembles at the mere sound of his wife's voice.

I was having dinner with him at a Thai restaurant one time after Lacson told on his dalliance when one of his cellular phones rang.

He told the person at the other end that he was with me and another friend, Kishore Hemlani.

And then a pause. "*Si, si, ora mismo,*" he said, trembling.

"*Pahamak talaga yang si Ping, pinauuwi na ako ngayon ng maaga ni* GMA," he said after the phone conversation.

Mike Arroyo left in a huff.

Angat water level up, but NWRB still wary

By Tina Santos

THE WATER situation at the Angat reservoir has improved but it is no cause for celebration.

Yesterday, the water level at Angat Dam, the main source of water for Metro Manila, showed that it had inched up from previous weeks, the National Water Resources Board said.

It was 6.04 meters below the safe level of 199.67. A few weeks ago, it was 7 meters below the safe level.

The increase in water, albeit little, indicated a reversal in the input and output ratio of the dam.

"Maybe the soil has already been saturated because of the rainfall so the water has been absorbed by the watershed and then goes to the dam," Ramon Alikpala, NWRB executive director explained.

The rainfall brought about by the scattered tail-end of a cold front affecting Luzon has also increased the water level at Umiray Dam in Quezon that also supplies water to Angat Dam.

Alikpala added that although the rate of increase could not really be considered significant, Alikpala said it reduced the average rate of water decline per day.

Commenting on the .06-meter rise in the level of Angat, Alikpala said, "That's really something because a few weeks ago, the water level was already at 7 meters below the rule curve."

But Alikpala was quick to add that it would be hard to predict whether or not a water crisis would still occur.

He added that with the current level, they were expecting the water level at Angat Dam to hit the critical level of 180 meters by the end of April, just in time for the rainy season to set in.

"It would be hard to tell, but we remain hopeful that the cloud-seeding and the coming rainy season would help," Alikpala said.

On Thursday last week, the Amiray Dam, through an underground tunnel, provided as much as 7,926,489.41 liters of water.

As a result, the 193.70 meter water level at Angat Dam in Bulacan on Wednesday rose to 193.77 meters.

The level continued to increase to 193.92 meters since Friday. As of 12 noon Sunday, the water level at Angat Dam was at 193.88 meters but the 0.04 meter decline from Saturday was insignificant as the water level was increasing as of yesterday afternoon.

Forecasters at the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical Astronomical Services Administration (Pag-asa) noted that rain also fell over the weekend on Angat Dam with 3 millimeter and 1 millimeter on Saturday and Sunday, respectively.

Asked if the rise in water level could be attributed to the water conservation efforts, Alikpala said, "I don't think so. It's just mainly because of the result of cloud seeding and rainfall."

Man stabs brother who criticized FPJ

POE

FOR THE love of actor and presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr., a fan stabbed his own brother to death the other night in Taguig.

The police said Avelino Leal Sr., 57, of Pinagsama Village, Western Bicutan, surrendered to barangay officials shortly after stabbing Ernesto, 50, also of the same village.

Ernesto, who suffered from a lone stab wound in the chest, was declared dead on arrival at the Ospital ng Makati.

According to the police, the Leal brothers were having a drinking session inside Ernesto's house at about 10 p.m. when they had an argument over their presidential bets.

Ernesto allegedly taunted Poe for being incompetent, and his brother for his choice of candidate. A fight and the stabbing ensued. *Margaux Ortiz*

METROBRIEFS

Starstruck victim

EMELITA de Guzman of Caloocan City tried to make fast money by riding on the fame of the popular TV show "Starstruck" but instead landed in jail yesterday in Marikina City. De Guzman allegedly tricked Mila Buenaventura, a housewife from Dasmariñas, Cavite, into giving her P300 to have songs sung by Buenaventura's daughter recorded for the program. The victim, however, discovered that De Guzman was not an employee of GMA, the network that runs show. *Luige del Puerto*

Drug dealers fall

TWO CHINESE men suspected of being members of a big-time drug syndicate were arrested during a buy-bust operation the other night. The police also confiscated more than a kilo of suspected shabu with a street price of more than P2 million, police said. The police identified the suspects as Delfin Chua, 38, and Chua Chai, 34, both natives of Fuchian, China. *Edson Tandoc Jr.*

3 suspects nabbed

JERRY Plumentera, 19, Domingo Corporal, 24, and Jovert Manlupig, 21, all of Barangay Malinao, Pasig City, thought they could evade arrest by making a quick change of clothing after a robbery in Pasig the other night. Their plan backfired, however, when patrolling barangay officers saw them changing clothes and got suspicious. *Luige del Puerto*

Jollibee warning

JOLLIBEE Foods Corporation is warning suppliers against people who pose as its employees and place orders by fax for the company. Jollibee officials said the company only orders from accredited suppliers which pass a rigid screening process. They urge establishments that receive orders from Jollibee to call the Company's Purchasing Division at 634-1111 local 7159 to verify if the order is authentic.

Parañaque plan

PARAÑAQUE City Mayor Joey Marquez yesterday gave his approval to a program that is hoped to bridge the gap between the business and the poor sectors of the city. The program is aimed at increasing investments in the city and provide employment to indigent residents.

Woman resists robbery, gets bullet in the face

By Leila B. Salaverria

A CHINESE-LOOKING woman died yesterday after being shot Sunday morning in Manila during a robbery inside an air-conditioned bus.

The victim, who remained unidentified as of yesterday afternoon after the suspects took her bag, succumbed to a gunshot wound in the head 15 hours after the incident.

She was described as between 23 to 25 years old, 5'4" tall, fair complexioned and weighing around 120 pounds.

Initial investigation showed that three men announced a robbery inside a G Liner bus (TVM 620) along R. Magsaysay Boulevard in Sta. Mesa at about 8 a.m. Sunday.

The robbers quickly began taking the bags and cellular phones of the passengers but the woman held back.

Irked, one of the suspects walked up to the woman and shot her in the right cheek. The bullet went out through the back of her head.

The victim was rushed to the Lourdes Hospital, where she died.

Hours earlier, a robbery suspect who allegedly shot 20-year-old Paula Chavez in the face during another robbery on Feb. 11 at the corner of Ma. Cristina and Piy Margal Streets in Sampaloc was arrested by the police.

Roselo de la Cruz, 28, a member of the Bahala na Gang and a resident of Pag-asa Street in Caloocan City, was later identified by Chavez and another witness.

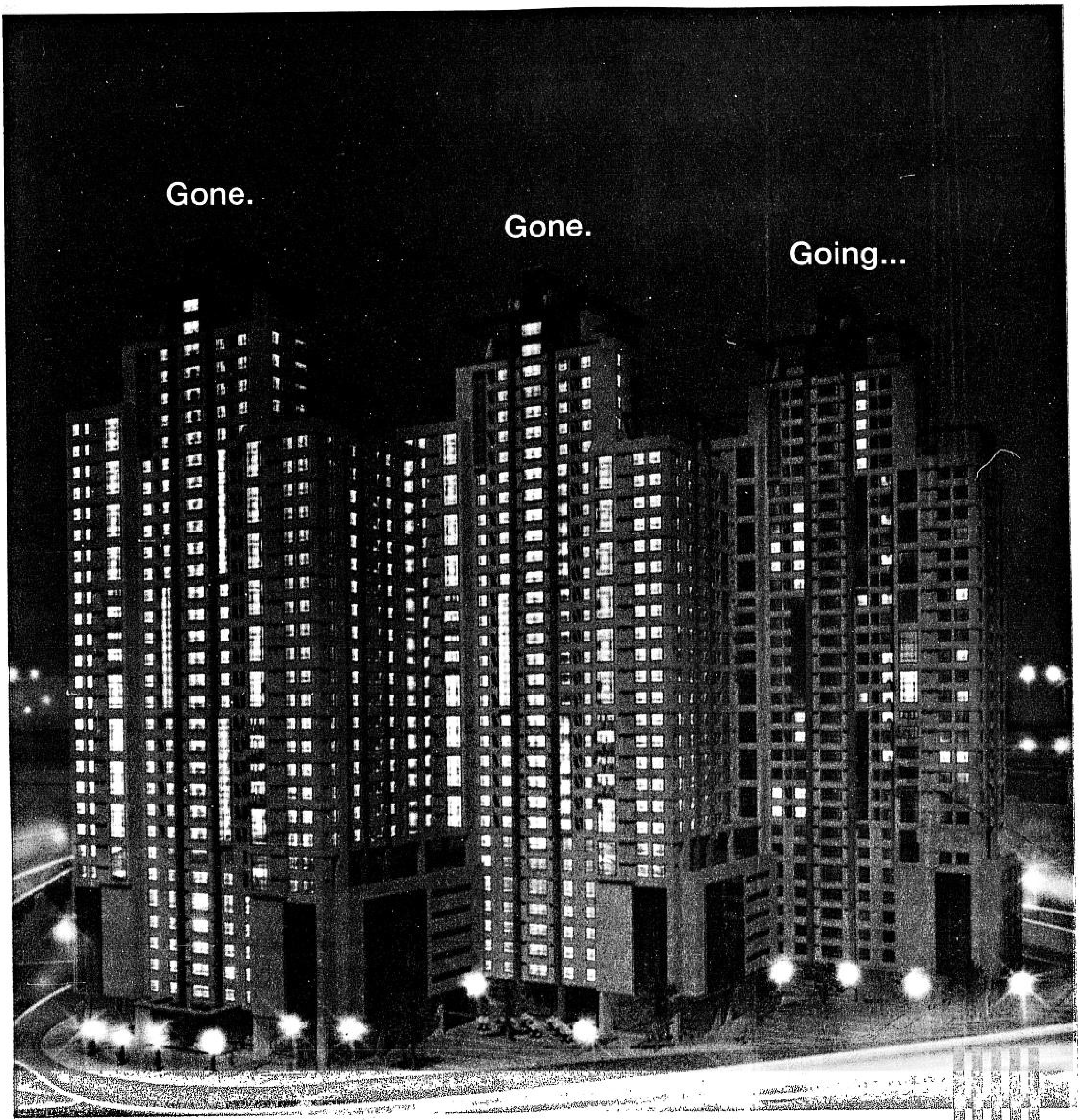
De la Cruz allegedly shot Chavez, a graduating student of the University of Sto. Tomas, when she refused to hand over her cellular phone.

Acting on a tip, Western Police District Homicide Unit members went to Tagaytay Street in Caloocan and spotted De la Cruz.

Homicide Unit chief Sr. Insp. Alejandro Yanguiling said the suspect tried to run away but was collared after a brief chase.

De la Cruz reportedly yielded a .38-caliber revolver, which the police believe was used in shooting Chavez.

CHILDREN enjoy a blast of water from the recently completed "Tubig para sa Barangay" project of Manila Water in Mandaluyong. Mayor Benhur Abalos is shown opening the gatevalve of the pipe that would supply water to more than 3,600 residents in Barangay Addition Hills.



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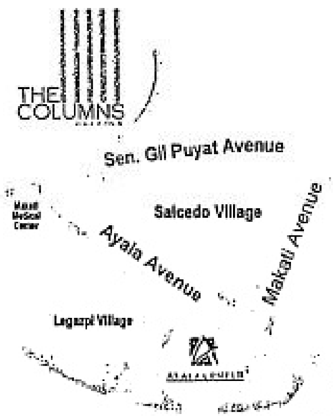
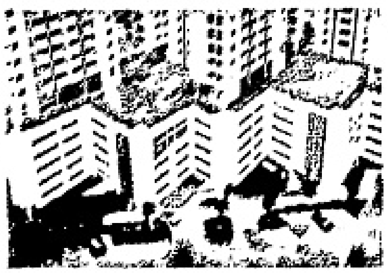


Strategically situated at the corner of Ayala Avenue and Sen. Gil J. Puyat Avenue (Buendia), The Columns, Ayala Avenue, Community Innovations Inc.'s landmark development, has come to redefine urban living. Many have already chosen it as their city address, attracted by its combination of convenience, relaxation, and prestige.

It's the ideal first home for young urban achievers who want to live a few steps from everything. Now, with Tower 3 opening for sale, it's also the last chance to embrace The Columns experience.

Garden in the City



At The Columns, Ayala Avenue, nature communes with urban living. Its open design creates a relaxing environment both in the towers and on the ground. The green Zen-like gardens that adorn the Grand Lobbies of the three towers soothe residents and guests alike.

In the Towers

Each tower offers thirty storeys, twenty-three residential floors, rising on a continuous seven-story podium. The towers are angled to catch bright morning sunshine and avoid afternoon heat. Studio, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom units offer maximized space for the urban lifestyle, with plentiful natural light and ventilation—a prized rarity in residential condos. Splendid views stretch from the Makati skyline to Manila Bay, and selected units on each floor offer bay windows and balconies.

The Columns Experience

By integrating its amenities with its entire lifestyle, The Columns transforms itself into a relaxing refuge that openly encourages the feeling of a real neighborhood. At the seventh floor of the podium, The Recreational Club spans all three towers, and serves as the club and meeting place for this vertical village. Two pools, a fitness center, a game room, function halls, a broad outdoor patio, and a day care center and playground fit the needs of every Columns resident. A jogging path and barbecue areas offer features uncommon to condos. It's all about creating community.

The Ground Floor of The Columns offers outdoor cafes and dining spots clustered around three landscaped plazas. With its quaint shops and al fresco lifestyle, the Ground Floor aims to be a destination in itself at its end of Ayala Avenue.

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SPORTS TV

Compiled by L. Mangulat

BASKETBALL: 2004 NBA All-Star Game, 9 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. (r); Solar Sports—Get another look at the mid-season classic held in Los Angeles.
NBA Greatest Games—Heat vs Knicks, Game 3, 2000 Eastern Semifinals; 12 noon; Solar Sports - See the bitter rivals Miami and New York go at it one more time.
Michael Jordan Tribute; 3 p.m.; Solar Sports—Relive the career of Air Jordan.
BOXING. World Championship Boxing; 10 p.m.; Star Sports—Catch the fight between Tye Fields and Julius Long.
Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

REVAMP PROTEST

Athletes plan rally against PSC

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THIS time it's the athletes who are up in arms.

Members of the national athletes' pool are planning a series of protest rallies to denounce the decision of the Philippine Sports Commission to cut their roster by half.

This was confirmed yesterday by athletics chief Go Teng Kok who said he was approached by some of his athletes to ask permission to join the rally.

Go prevailed upon his athletes to calm down and promised them that he will try to strike a deal with the PSC.

He said he will ask the sports agency to at least continue the meal allowance of the athletes who won't be retained and provide them free lodging at government-owned facilities like the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex and the Philsports.

He will also propose that the agency, in order to "show good faith" to the athletes, terminate at least one-third of the estimated 400 contractual employees in its payroll.

"We really can't do anything much right now because the PSC has no funds, but we have to find ways so we can meet halfway. Each party should make a sacrifice," said Go, whose association won the most gold medals at eight in the Vietnam SEA Games.

GO: Mediation

Go's proposal was supported by fellow NSA heads like Buddy Andrada of tennis, Robert Aventajado of taekwondo and Rep. Monico Puentevella of weightlifting.

The Philippine Amateur Track and Field Association itself is heavily affected by the PSC move which was announced last Friday by PSC chair Eric Buhain.

Go said that if the Patafa follows the PSC's proposed criteria—accommodation for any athlete who won a medal in the recent SEA Games—the association will be left with only 15 athletes out of the 48 members in its training pools.

"And to think that we won a total of 15 medals in Vietnam," said Go. "Imagine how this will affect those who didn't win a medal in Vietnam."

Buhain gathered the athletes at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium last Friday to announce the PSC's plan to trim their number down to 500.

The PSC is expected to save P70 million from that drastic move which, Buhain said, would be spent for more foreign stints and training for those who will stay in the national athletes pool.

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Lim: BAP not slamming door on PBA

By June Navarro

LET'S talk it over.

BAP secretary general Graham Lim yesterday said a meeting with PBA officials will end talk that the BAP is on the verge of severing its ties with the pro league with regards to the formation of the national team to the Asian Games.

"We (PBA and BAP) have to talk about it. We are not slamming the door on the PBA. In fact, everybody is welcome as long as they are willing to help the national team," Lim told the INQUIRER.

He stressed that he was just expressing his opinion when he said last week that the BAP would try to form the Philippine team—without the PBA's help—for the Asiad and the Asian Basketball Confederation championships.

"Every decision has to be approved by the BAP board. I'm not the BAP; it just happens that I'm a high-ranking official of the organization," said Lim.

Lim also asked that Cebuana Lhuillier, the national team's chief backer, be spared from criticism.

"Cebuana Lhuillier is here to help the team. It's hard to find a sponsor that is willing to help us all the way," he said.

Cebuana Lhuillier owner Jean Henri Lhuillier supported Lim, saying his company welcomes the idea of bringing in other sponsors and basketball entities to help the national team.

"Everybody involved in local basketball should work together for a common goal," said Lhuillier in a statement.

Earlier, PBA commissioner Noli Eala said the country's national team faced bleak prospects in the event the BAP severed its ties with the pro league.

"It's just impossible for them to have a national basketball program that excludes others, especially the PBA," said Eala during the launch of the PBA's 2004 season yesterday at the Diamond Hotel.

"Regardless of whom we are talking to we have a commitment to the national team. We just don't turn our backs on it. Now, if they don't want us, let us know," said PBA chair Buddy Encarnado.

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TOYOTA

Rookie Thoss eyes NBA stint

THOSS sees the PBA as a mere springboard.

By June Navarro

EVERY basketball fan dreams of playing in the Philippine Basketball Association.

Not Sonny Thoss, the 6-foot-7 power forward drafted fifth overall in this year's rookie draft by the Alaska Aces.

The 22-year-old Filipino-German sees the PBA as a mere springboard to a career, hopefully, in the National Basketball Association, a lifetime dream since he first picked up a basketball at the age of four.

"Making it to the NBA is a tough goal but anything's possible if you put your heart into what you do. It really depends on my progress. Perhaps, five years from now," said Thoss, a self-confessed Michael Jordan diehard.

Helping Thoss try his luck in the international basketball arena is US-based player-agent Mike Gonzales, who will bring the rookie to the United States in the PBA off-season in hopes of getting him to play in US-based leagues like the IBL, ABA or the NDBL.

Alaska team manager Joaqui Trillo said Thoss shows a lot of promise and has the tools to compete in the US.

"I think he can. He's very hard-working and has the potential but a lot of hard work lies ahead for him," Trillo told the INQUIRER.

Gonzales has connections with AMG Sports, an organization known for supplying players to the International Basketball League (IBL), Continental Basketball Association (CBA), American Basketball Association (ABA) and the National Basketball Development League (NDBL) in the past five years.

"I wouldn't even dare pressure them (US leagues) to let Sonny play. I'll let them see how he plays. I believe Sonny has what it takes to become a great player in the States," said Gonzales.

Gonzales also said he would work out a deal with the US leagues to expose Thoss—who had had brief stints in the ABA and NBL, two of Australia's top pro leagues—to the international brand of play.

Gonzales was responsible for bringing in most of the imports in the PBA like Antonio Lang, Damien Owens and Artemus McClary, all Best Import awardees in previous seasons.

With more than 80 players under his wings, he also brought Sta. Lucia's Kwan Johnson and Ray Tutt, Alaska's Chris Carawell and Isaac Fontaine, Harold Ellis and Red Bull's Julius Nwosu and Sean Lampley and Coca-Cola's Ron Hale to the PBA.

Tough Asian Moto races slated in P. Princesa

AGUILAR

MAXIMUM excitement is expected when Puerto Princesa hosts Round 2 of the 2004 FIM Asian International Motocross Championships Series on March 28.

The country's biggest motorsport event this year, featuring defending Asian Motocross champion Glenn Aguilar of Caltex Revtex Team, will be held at a sprawling four-hectare site adjacent to the City Hall.

The races will also showcase Asia's top riders as they dispute the centerpiece 2004 FIM Asian Motocross Open 125 cc title as well as the 2004 FIM Junior Motocross and the 85 cc crowns.

Federation Internationale de Motorcycliste (FIM) Asian Motocross president Macky Carapiet flew recently to Puerto Princesa to inspect the track and give the stamp of approval for the motocross spectacle sponsored by Philippine Air Lines, Dusit Hotel Makati, Oakley Philippines and The Legend Hotel Palawan.

"The Motocross track prepared by the Palaweños is definitely one of the most challenging we've seen in the Asian region," said Carapiet. "The rolling natural terrain promises maximum excitement and a lot of jumps and bumps."

The winner of the 125 Asian Championship class will be awarded the Mayor Edward Hagedorn Cup.

The event will be telecast on national television program, "Speed."

"The event is guaranteed to promote and present Puerto Princesa City, the province of Palawan and ultimately the Philippines to the world through sports tourism," said organizing committee head Ken Falco of Namssa.

Riders from 10 countries, namely, Japan, Australia, Malaysia, Indonesia, New Zealand, China, Thailand, India, Sri Lanka and the Philippines, will compete for individual and team honors and the prestigious Coupe des Nations Asiatique, a trophy awarded to the country of the best performing riders.

The Philippines bagged the trophy in 2003 behind the impressive performances of Aguilar and Namssa Caltex Revtex junior rider Kenneth San Andres in their respective divisions throughout the season.

FIESTA CONFERENCE

Expect the unexpected

ODDSMAKERS know what to expect in the Philippine Basketball Association Fiesta Conference: They're expecting the unexpected.

A flurry of trades in the off-season and a fresh influx of talents from the collegiate ranks have shaken up the league hierarchy, making for what could be one of the most unpredictable tournaments in years.

Teams like Talk 'N Text, Red Bull and Coca-Cola remain entrenched in the upper half of the form charts of most oddsmakers, but ball clubs that struggled last season have shown they've considerably bridged the gap.

When the transition tournament unfolds Feb. 22 at the Araneta Coliseum, it's a good bet more teams would be in the hunt for the trophy the pro league will have at stake this year.

For one, Shell, which has not contended for a championship in years, went through a top-to-bottom revamp starting with the appointment of American coach Johan Moran to replace longtime mentor Perry Ronquillo.

Moran has made quite an impact since he took over, letting go of former top pick Eddie Laure and starting guard Dale Singson to make room for No. 1 choice overall Rich Alvarez and big men Billy Mamaril and Carlo Sharma.

INTENSE, pulse-pounding action will be back in the Fiesta Conference. PDI PHOTO

The three have instantly made Shell competitive at the frontline—a spot where the Turbochargers wee beaten black and blue in the past years.

Coming off its worst season under young coach Ryan Gregorio, Purefoods was also among the busiest teams in the off-season, using the rookie draft and the trade market to address two major concerns.

In Jun Limpot, the Hotdogs got a crafty veteran who could be a constant threat at the low block—something Gregorio felt the team lacked last season.

The Hotdogs have also acquired two of the biggest gems from the draft—James Yap, a deadly gunner who is good enough to step into a starting forward spot, and his UE teammate Paul Artadi, a tested warrior at point guard.

FedEx, on the other hand, went solely to the draft to revamp its squad, infusing young blood and getting better on paper.

Trading former No. 1 overall pick Yancy de Ocampo for the last of three first-round picks in the draft, the Express got themselves a handful with high-leaping Marc Pingris, 6-5 ex-national Ranidel de Ocampo and former Ateneo star Wesley Gonzales.

Barangay Ginebra has also given its fans enough reasons to look forward to the league's transition season, putting together a bigger and more balanced lineup after a couple of major moves in the off-season.

W'Wack shoots for 3rd title

₱2M at stake as Uratex caddies golf unfolds today

DEFENDING champion Wack Wack guns for its third consecutive crown when the Uratex National Caddies Championship comes off the wraps today at the Valley Golf Club's Executive course. Tee-off time is 6 a.m.

Wack Wack and its big guns are up against a huge field of entries vying for the lion's share of P2 million in total prizes in the tournament— one of the world's most unique golfing events featuring bag-toters from all over the country.

Teams come from as far north as Baguio and as far south as Ozamiz.

"On behalf of my family, I welcome the caddies to their own national championship," said Naty Cheng, widow of the late businessman Robert Go Cheng, in whose memory the tournament is being held.

Cheng, through his RGC Group of Companies, launched the tournament in 1988 at Capitol Hills. He died last October 29 of heart attack but his widow—with the help of their children Pinky, Peachy and Big Boy—decided to continue the event in honor of the Cheng patriarch.

Highlighting today's opening round is the hitting of ceremonial drives at 8 a.m. by First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, Sen. Tito Sotto, Valley president Mekoy Quiogue, Capitol Hills president Boy Roman, Damian Pe, Victory Dy Sun, Greg Pangan, Frank Manalo, Eddie Gallor and Col. Abe Villanueva.

"The Executive course may be relatively short but it certainly is equally challenging," said Jose "Pinggoy" Cruz, Valley's sports and games committee chair.

The event began yesterday with Taby Tabaniag conducting the rules lecture to the caddies.

The men's individual and team champions will receive gift certificates worth P75,000 and television sets, with the ladies' champion getting P20,000.

BUSTAMANTE: Three of 3

Django powers World All-Stars

FILIPINO Francisco "Django" Bustamante swept his three assignments as the World All-Star Team routed the Chinese Taipei All-Stars, 13-7, in the World Stars Invitational Team Cup 9-Ball Championship held in Taiwan during the weekend.

Bustamante beat Chang Hao-ping, 7-3, and Lee Kun-fang, 7-3, in the singles and then combined with compatriot Efren "Bata" Reyes in hurdling Lee and Fu Che-wei, 9-7, in the doubles.

An off-form Reyes dropped both his singles matches to Yang Ching-shun (7-5) and Kang Chin-ching, 7-4.

Other members of the World All-Stars were Alex Pagulayan, Americans Earl Strickland and Rodney Morris, Finland's Mika Immonen, Germany's Ralf Souquet and Japan's Kunihiko Takahashi.

Souquet also notched 3 points for the All-Stars.

The winners received $50,000 (about P2.8 million).

Winners all

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

IT WAS basketball entertainment at its best. Dunks here and there. Alley-oops were but peanuts thrown into a manhole. Triples? They came in all directions. Even the lumbering kind, such as seven-footers Shaquille O'Neal and Tim Duncan, went coast-to-coast with relative ease. That was a no-no during regular games, when giants were just supposed to grab rebounds and stuff in basket after another basket. It couldn't get any better than this.

Welcome to the land of the best and the brightest.

Welcome to the NBA All-Star game.

Welcome to the heart of NBA country.

The NBA All-Star game has always been hyped up as the showcase of the best talents there is in the world's No. 1 basketball league. It flaunts its offensive sock more than its defensive savvy, accounting always for a high-scoring game.

It happened again yesterday, when West and East unraveled their best sons at the Staples Center, home of the Los Angeles Lakers.

As in all the past 52 All-Star games, you didn't see much competition during its 53rd edition yesterday. As usual, what you saw was pure show time.

That's been always the rule. Nobody thinks of winning here. Everybody just thinks of entertaining everybody.

Both teams were winners again at the end of the game. Meaning, they were both winners in entertaining an audience. For, in an All-Star game, you don't have spectators. What you have are fans.

Spectators take sides as they come expecting blood to spill on the hard court.

Fans treat everybody as performers, heaping praise, applauding stunts, even if they see no one on the floor spilling his guts out in the strictest sense of the word.

At the end of every All-Star game, everybody feels great, everybody goes home happy. The performers, as well as the crowd, go to bed with smiles on their lips. Shows are a lot different from games in that shows cater to adults wanting to be treated as kids again.

Shaquille O'Neal got the MVP trophy but that's just a bonus. He was merely the best among all the performers, but that does not mean the rest of the performers weren't at their best during the show. No. Everybody was at his best or Shaq could not have stood out from the clutch of great performers yesterday. As Shaq himself had said, "It was a great team effort." And he added, "I had fun today."

Fun has always been a necessary ingredient to ensure the success of a great show. Without fun, you take away that primary component of creating serious business. Without a horse, how can a carriage run?

And to every great show, a tinge of drama would always accompany it. Listen to Shaq: "By the grace of God, I got it (my MVP trophy)."

The best performer is always allowed that: The luxury of inventing one-liners.

Oh, yes, I almost forgot. The West prevailed, 135-132.

But, as I said, who cares about facts, stats?

Shaq scored 24 points and grabbed 11 rebounds in 24 minutes of play. But again, who cares?

The cast of every NBA All-Star game is measured not by how well each one of them played, but how well each one of them performed.

To illustrate, the East members made only 11 of their 22 free throws and therefore, are they to blame for their defeat?

No. In every NBA All-Star game, nobody blames nobody. Facts, game stats, they are virtually non-existent. No analysis, no nothing. As I said, there will never be losers here. Only winners.

Fans know that by heart.

***

FASTBREAK. Joe Javier wrote to say his batch mates in Class 1964 of the Marcelo H. Del Pilar High School in Malolos, Bulacan, will hold their reunion on Saturday, Feb. 21, at the Villa Iluminada Resort in Barangay Bungahan, Malolos City, starting at 9 a.m. Joe's classmates include class valedictorian Cora Tapang-Lopez, now with Assumption College, and Toyota Motors Phils. Inc SVP for Manufacturing Serafin "Afin" Pantaleon, my golf mate. Joe, who was the 1964 class governor and who has now become a cigar connoisseur, is presently vice president for News & Public Affairs of ABC-5. If you won't invite me to your party, Joe, Afin will surely mind it. Anyway, here's to a spirited bash on your 40th anniversary.

RP's Rodrigo loses OPBF crown bid

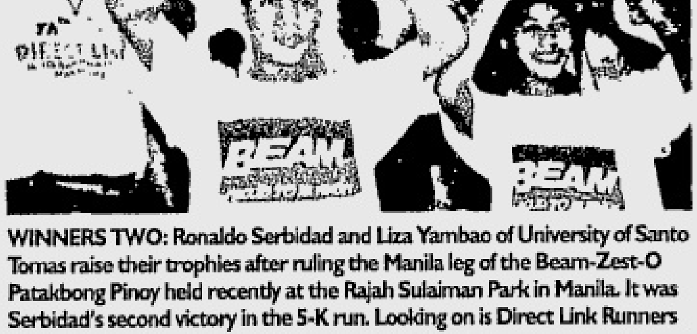
PHILIPPINE flyweight champ Edgar Rodrigo failed in his first crack at the Orient-Pacific Boxing Federation title, losing on a technical split decision to titleholder Noriyuki Komatsu last Sunday in Osaka, Japan.

Rodrigo bombarded the Japanese champ with all sorts of blows early in the opening round, but got floored himself by a counter left hook in the dying seconds to barely survive the canto.

Rodrigo rallied from the third round until an accidental clash of heads in the fifth opened a cut below the Filipino's right eyebrow.

The ringside physician eventually halted the bout in the eighth round due to the profuse bleeding from Rodrigo's cut.

At the end of the fight, two judges scored it 79-72 and 80-71 in favor of Komatsu, while Filipino judge Nick Giongco saw it 76-75 for Rodrigo. *Salven L. Lagumbay*



WINNERS TWO: Ronaldo Serbidad and Liza Yambao of University of Santo Tomas raise their trophies after ruling the Manila leg of the Beam-Zest-O Patakbong Pinoy held recently at the Rajah Sulaiman Park in Manila. It was Serbidad's second victory in the 5-K run. Looking on is Direct Link Runners Club president Romy Morales, whose group helped the Media Runners and Sports Promotions and the Manila Sports Council in hosting the event.

SPORTSWATCH

Fil-Am ladies golf tees off

BAGUIO CITY—Some 60 parbusters representing eight golf clubs tee off today at the start of the inaugural Ladies Fil-Am golf tournament at the par-61 Baguio Golf Club course. Nine teams will be vying for top honors in the Fil Division including Negros Occidental Golf and Country Club, Victoria's Golf & Country Club, Alabang Country Club, Riviera Golf Club, Philippine Navy and Manila Southwoods, and hosts Baguio Country Club and Camp John Hay. Among the teams competing in the Am division are Navy and hosts BCC and CJHGC. Negros Occidental GCC is fielding two players who will compete for individual honors in the Am division. The 72-hole tournament will use the modified Stableford system of scoring (Molave point system).

Rousing warm-up wins

ST. STEPHEN High School and Xavier warmed up for their titular duel with similar runaway wins at the close of the 28th MMTLBA basketball tournament at the Chiang Kai Shek gym. St. Stephen posted its league-best ninth win in 10 games by routing cellar-dweller St. Jude (1-9), 96-68, while defending champion Xavier (8-2) crushed Hope Christian (4-6), 114-62. The protagonists clash tomorrow with St. Stephen carrying a twice-to-beat edge. Kish Co was the only player who scored in double figures for St. Stephen although all the players it fielded scored at least two points. Carl Cua and Dominic Ong combined for 44 points but got little support from their teammates. Meanwhile, Louie Christian Lao scattered 18 points to lead Xavier, which also got 12 from Justin Qua and 11 each from Mikael Tan, Eric Dee and Randolph Chua. In the other game, UNO (6-4) buckled down to work in the second quarter onward to score a 65-55 decision over Chiang Kai Shek (2-8).

Z ready for Mangubat tiff

CEBU CITY—Z "The Dream" Gorres, the country's top-ranked flyweight, is so hyped up with his Feb. 20 showdown with former WBC International champ Randy Mangubat he's flown to Manila a good week before the fight. Gorres left Cebu last Sunday with sportsman Tony Aldeguer and immediately got together with his lawyer manager, Rudy Salud, at the inauguration of the Wild Card Gym in Manila. The southpaw Gorres (15-1 with 9 KO's) goes up against the 61-fight veteran Mangubat toughened by more than 100 rounds of sparring, according to trainer Edito "Ala" Villamor. Gorres' sparmates at the ALA Gym included Sherwin Paro, Pedro Malco, Rey Bautista, Reyman Salim and Roselito Campaña. "I've made special preparations for Mangubat," warns Gorres. Salud has said that should Gorres hurdle Mangubat, he would arrange a US fight for his ward, possibly in the undercard of the Manny Pacquiao-Juan Marquez duel on May 22 in Las Vegas. *Salven L. Lagumbay*

35 teams in Asian chess

THIRTY-FIVE teams from 25 countries have confirmed participation in the Asian Cities Chess Team Championship starting March 20. Project director Casto Abundo said the venue has yet to be finalized for the 9-round Swiss system championship that will see some of Asia's finest grandmasters in action. The teams include Manama, Teheran and Ifsahan (Iran), Al-quds (Palestine), Doha, Ajman, Dubai and Sharjah (United Arab Emirates), Aden, Dhaka, Chennai, Hyderabad and Kanchipuram (India), Lahore, Bandar Seri Begawan, Hong Kong, Jakarta, Smarinda and Padang (Indonesia), Tokyo, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Yangon, Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh, Sydney, Auckland, Guangzhou, Pavlodar (Kazakhstan), and Namangan (Uzbekistan). As host country, the Philippines will field four teams, namely, Mandaluyong, Pasay, Tanauan and the national contingent. Named to the RP team are GMs Eugene Torre, Joey Antonio and Bong Villamayor, IM Mark Paragua and Ronald Dableo.

FEU, Ateneo shuttlers rule

FAR Eastern and Ateneo pinned down this time what slipped them last season—the University Athletic Association of the Philippines (UAAP) badminton crowns. Lloyd Escoses, a national team mainstay, carried the Tamaraws to the men's title following a 3-2 victory over their tormentors last year, the University of the Philippines Maroons. Ateneo, meanwhile, scored a 4-1 victory over FEU at the close of competitions recently at the Rizal Memorial Badminton Hall and clinched its first team title in the UAAP. Arlene Chiu headed Ateneo against De La Salle, 3-2. Santo Tomas was second in the men's division followed by UP, University of the East, La Salle and Ateneo. In the women's side, FEU wound up second, 2002 champion De La Salle fell to third, followed by UST, UP and UE.

Roligon 4-cocker today

BIG-TIME cockers are vying in another special 4-cock derby starting at 7 p.m. today at Roligon Mega Cockpit. General manager Danny Ty said the event is a fitting follow-up to last week's 14th Anniversary 7-Cock Derby, which attracted 325 entries and was won by upcoming breeder Carlos Pimentel (Winston) and Alan Tan (TFW). Early favorites in today's event are the entries of Blandy Tolentino, Mayor Jessie Viceo, Flower Group, Alan Tan, James Uy, Alfie Sy, Boy Marzo, Bebot and Max Roxas of Tarlac, William Co, Joey and Buboy de los Santos of Laguna, among others. Pit *llamador* Renato Shio said all center bets would be squared during the derby's 50 or so fights. Meanwhile, a guaranteed prize of P250,000 is up for grabs in Saturday's "Cash Premyo Rumble 2-Cock Ulutan" to be hosted by Abraham Bernales, Bebot Reyes and the WPC group. For inquiries, call 833-2275, 833-1638, 852-9821 and 852-9774.

Benilde leads beach volley

DEFENDING champion College of St. Benilde posted twin wins to stamp its class in the men's division of the 2nd National Collegiate Athletic Association Beach Volleyball Competition at the La Salle Greenhills Gym. The Blazers routed Jose Rizal University, 2-0 (21-8, 21-5), and San Beda, 2-0 (21-16, 21-12), to lead the field. Keeping pace with CSB are the Stags of San Sebastian College who won over Letran, 2-1 (23-25,21-19,15,11), and UPHR, 2-0 (21-9,21-12.

Shaq stars, lifts West past East

LOS ANGELES—In an All-Star game that was all about dunks, Tim Duncan's made freethrow—a rarity on this evening—with 2.1 seconds left provided an anticlimactic ending to the NBA's showcase event.

In a game featuring 44 dunks and 16 botched freethrows—half of the 32 that were attempted—the West defeated the East, 136-132, Sunday night.

Shaquille O'Neal was the game's MVP with 24 points in 24 minutes—18 of them on dunks. Kobe Bryant—the other hometown player—added 20 points on 9-for-12 shooting.

"Can you dig it?" O'Neal screamed to the crowd afterward.

They dug it, all right, just not at the end. And they briefly weren't digging Bryant, either, when he casually put in a layup early in the fourth quarter despite being alone ahead of the field.

It was a rare instance of the local crowd treating Bryant poorly, though the booing was very brief and seemed a bit lighthearted.

The glamour and glitz quotient was high, the arena filled with movie stars, beautiful people and celebrities of every ilk. The players gave them a show, complete with a new twist of wearing mismatched sneakers, but the climax was not the type of Hollywood ending everyone would have preferred.

Bryant had a steal and what should have been a 3-pointer with 1:20 left, but the officials only counted it as a 2-pointer—tying the game 131-131.

O'Neal fouled Tracy McGrady with 37 seconds left, but McGrady could only make one of two from the line. The West got the ball to Duncan on its next possession for a 10-foot bank shot that put them ahead, 133-132, with 26.1 seconds left.

McGrady's alley-oop pass to Jermaine O'Neal went out of bounds, and Ray Allen's two freethrows with 14.4 seconds left put the West ahead by three.

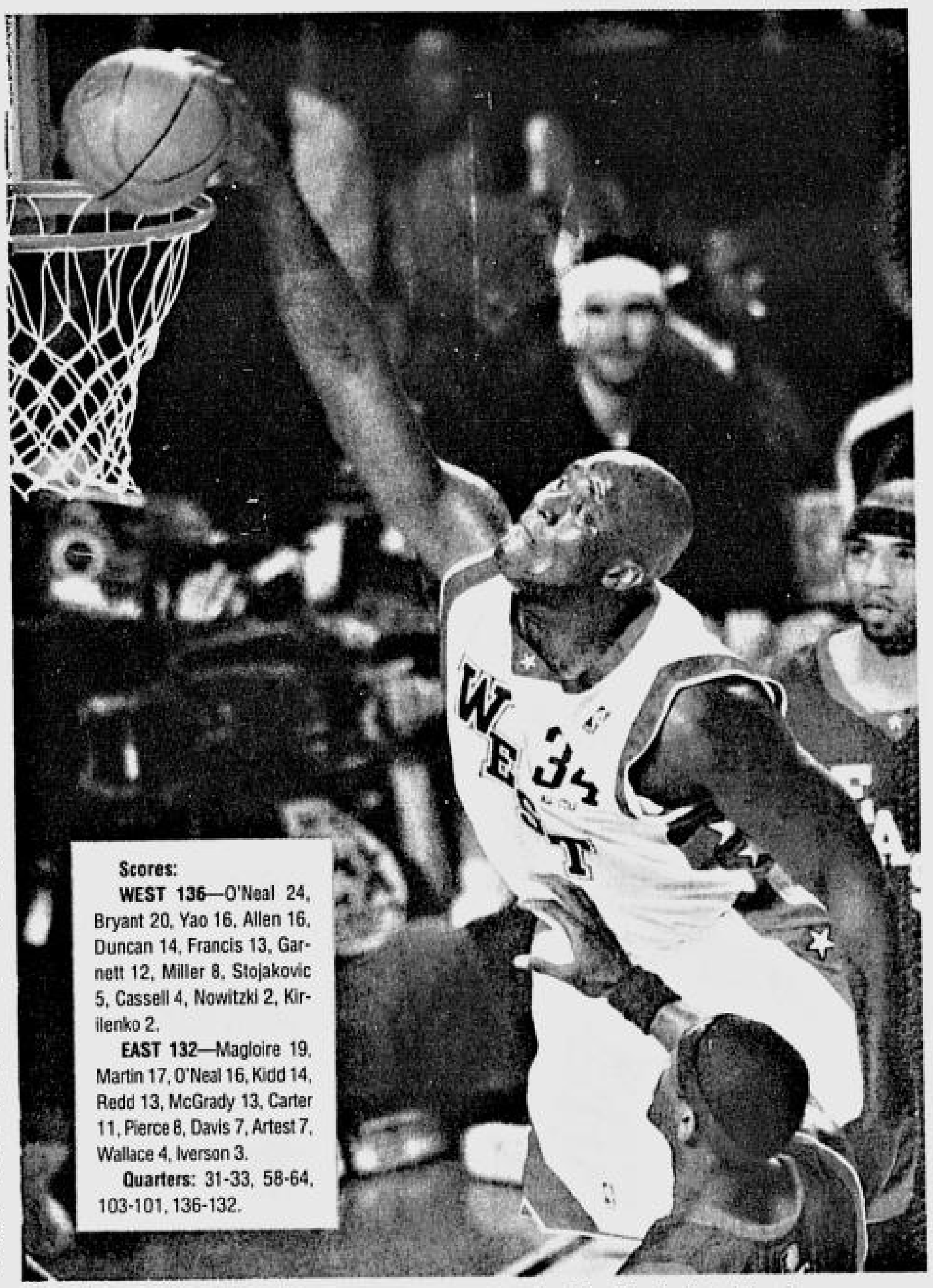
He calmly made the freethrow, and that was it.

Several of the stars tried to show something out of the ordinary—aside from the shoes—in the first quarter. Shaq stutter-stepped as he brought the ball upcourt and took it to the hole, Yao Ming tried a 3-pointer (an airball), Allen Iverson tried unsuccessfully to take Kevin Garnett one-on-one, and Bryant showed off a few streetball moves.

Meanwhile, the New York Knicks have acquired forward Tim Thomas and center Nazr Mohammed in a three-way trade which involves Keith van Horn leaving Madison Square Garden, the Knicks said Sunday.

Van Horn is heading to the Milwaukee Bucks in exchange for Thomas while Mohammed joins the Knicks.

In Springfield, Massachusetts, former NBA great Clyde Drexler and European star Drazen Dalipagic were named Sunday with 14 others as finalists for the Basketball Hall of Fame. *AP*



Scores:

WEST 136—O'Neal 24, Bryant 20, Yao 16, Allen 16, Duncan 14, Francis 13, Garnett 12, Miller 8, Stojakovic 5, Cassell 4, Nowitzki 2, Kirilenko 2.

EAST 132—Magloire 19, Martin 17, O'Neal 16, Kidd 14, Redd 13, McGrady 13, Carter 11, Pierce 8, Davis 7, Artest 7, Wallace 4, Iverson 3.

Quarters: 31-33, 58-64, 103-101, 136-132.

O'NEAL slams one in as Ron Artest and Kenyon Martin of the East look helplessly. AP

Roddick reels in Fish

SAN JOSE, California—Andy Roddick of the United States won his first title of 2004, topping countryman Mardy Fish, 7-6 (13), 6-4, in a thrilling match Sunday at the $380,000 Siebel Open.

The top-seeded Roddick, who's ranked No. 3 in the world, improved to 12-2 this year by outlasting Fish in a fabulous first set. It featured sizzling serves by both and plenty of razzing between players who lived together for a year in high school.

As they shook hands, Roddick pulled Fish into an embrace and patted him on the behind.

"We just know what each other's going to do," Roddick said.

In four meetings, the two have played four tiebreakers. Roddick saved four set points in Sunday's tiebreaker and had five break points before winning the ninth game of the second set—the only service break of the match. *AP*

Daly ends 9-year slump, rules Buick via playoff

DALY holds the winner's trophy. REUTERS

SAN DIEGO—John Daly hit a 100-foot bunker shot to within 4 inches to win a three-man playoff at the Buick Invitational, his first PGA Tour victory in nearly nine years.

It wasn't over Sunday until Chris Riley, who grew up playing Torrey Pines, watched in disbelief as his 5-foot birdie putt on the par-5 18th rimmed all the way around the cup.

Luke Donald earlier missed from 6 feet.

"It's the greatest," Daly said. "I can't explain it. I've had a lot of ups and downs. Geez, this is sweet."

Daly had plenty of twists and turns in the final round, but nothing compared to his life off the course.

Since winning the '95 British Open at St. Andrews—his second major—Daly has gone through another divorce, had another trip to alcohol rehab, and now waits to see what happens to his fourth wife, indicted last summer on drug and gambling charges five days after she gave birth to his first son.

He put all that behind him with a performance only he saw coming.

Daly, No. 299 in the world ranking at the start of the week, closed with a 75, the highest final-round score by a PGA Tour winner in 13 years. Steve Pate also had a 75 in the final round of the '91 Honda Classic.

Daly might not have made the playoff if not for his clutch short game. He got up-and-down from the bunker 10 out of 12 times during the week, no shot more important than the playoff.

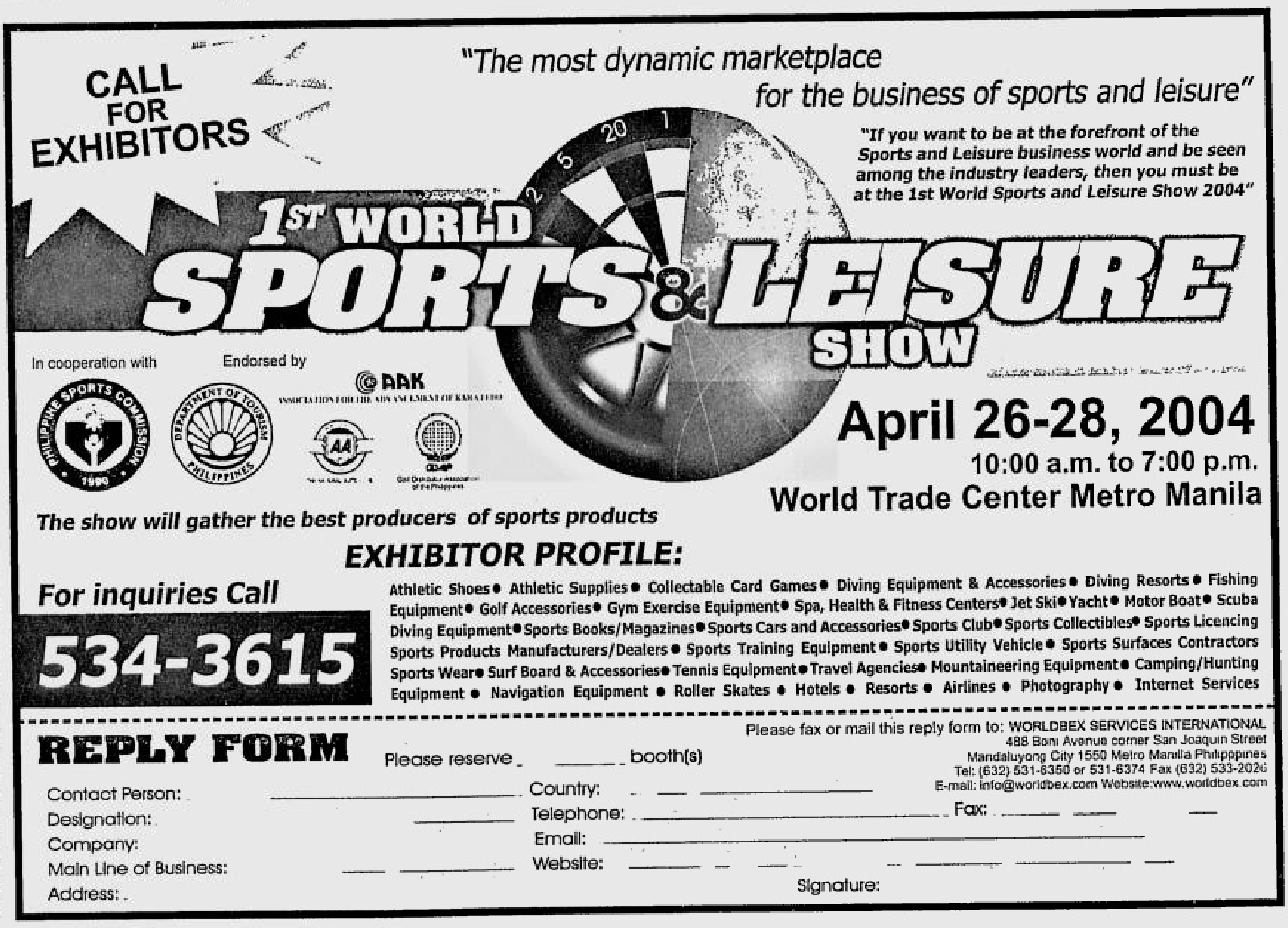
He had about 100 feet of green between him and the pond, with Riley and Donald already in birdie range. Daly hit a bold shot, and urged the ball on—"Go! Go!" he yelled—as it trickled toward the cup.

For Riley, it was a bitter end.

He grew up in San Diego, and this tournament means more to him than any other on the PGA Tour. Riley, among the best in golf with the short stick, calmly rapped his birdie putt.

Riley's routine is to not look up for several seconds. He thought it was pure, but when he finally glanced at the hole, he saw it slipping out of the right side.

Daly won $864,000 for his fifth PGA Tour victory. *AP*



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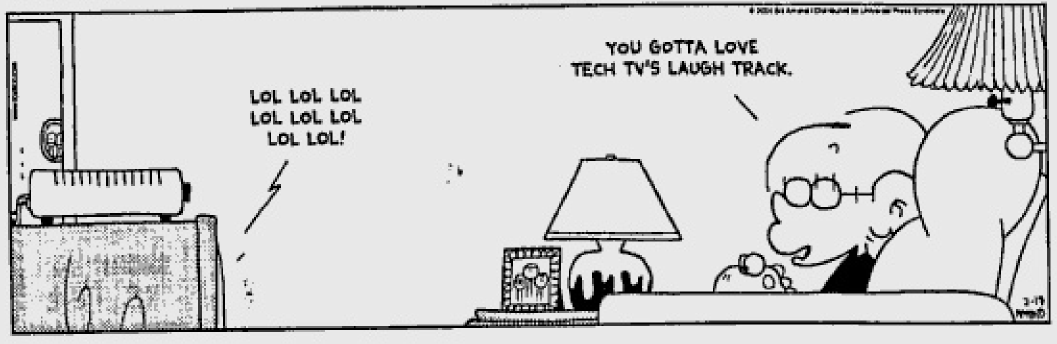
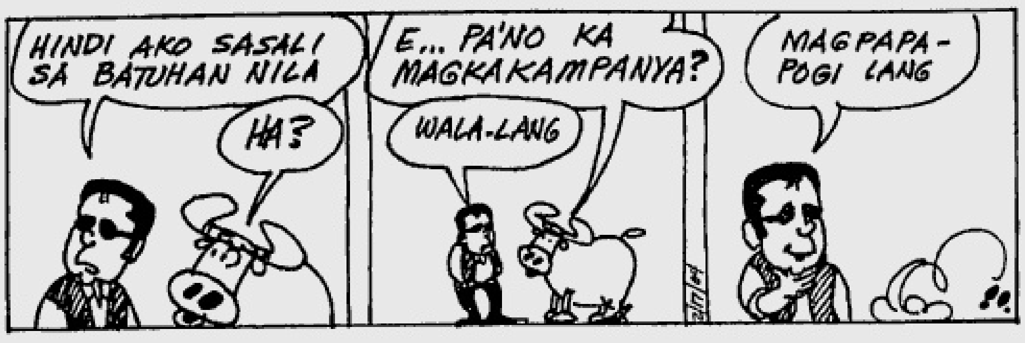
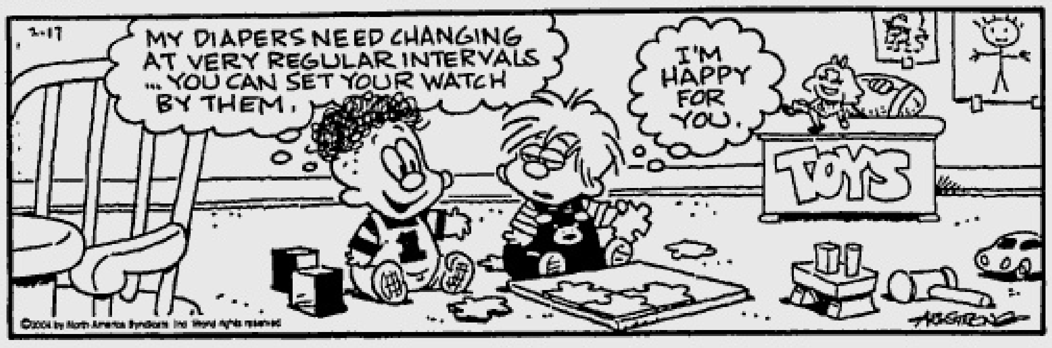
FOXTROT BY BILL AMEND


LOL LOL LOL
LOL LOL LOL
LOL LOL!
YOU GOTTA LOVE TECH TV'S LAUGH TRACK.

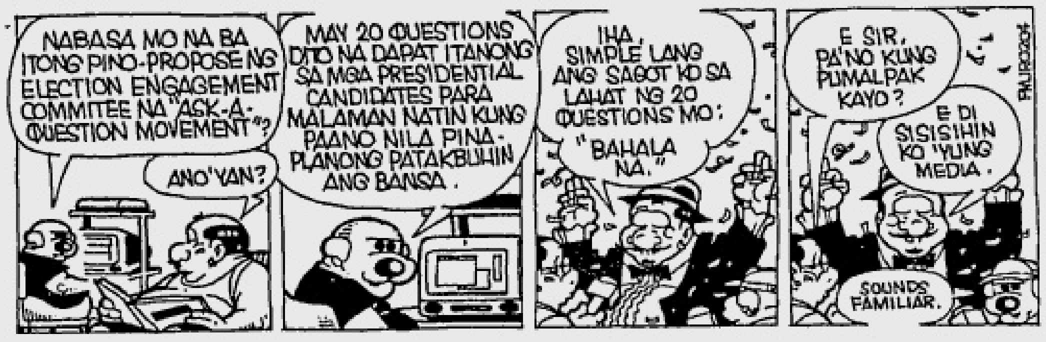
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


HINDI AKO SASALI SA BATUHAN NILA
HA?
E... PA'NO KA MAGKAKAMPANYA?
WALA-LANG
MAGPAPA-POGI LANG

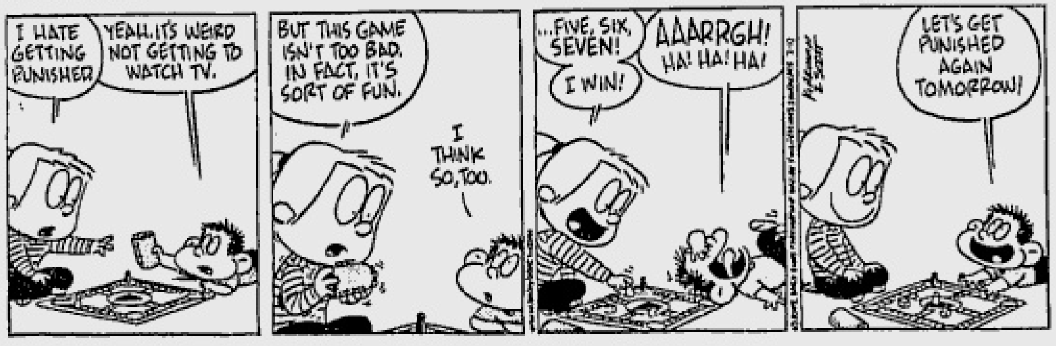
MARVIN BY TOM ARMSTRONG


MY DIAPERS NEED CHANGING AT VERY REGULAR INTERVALS ... YOU CAN SET YOUR WATCH BY THEM.
I'M HAPPY FOR YOU.
TOYS

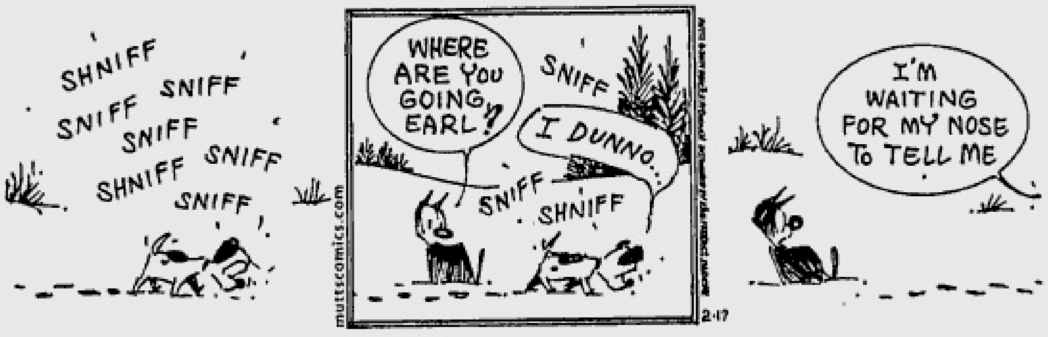
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


NABASA MO NA BA ITONG PINO-PROPOSE NG ELECTION ENGAGEMENT COMMITEE NA "ASK-A-QUESTION MOVEMENT"?
ANO'YAN?
MAY 20 QUESTIONS DITO NA DAPAT ITANONG SA MGA PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES PARA MALAMAN NATIN KUNG PAANO NILA PINA-PLANONG PATAKBUHIN ANG BANSA.
IHA, SIMPLE LANG ANG SAGOT KO SA LAHAT NG 20 QUESTIONS MO: "BAHALA NA."
E SIR, PA'NO KUNG PUMALPAK KAYO?
E DI SISISIHIN KO 'YUNG MEDIA.
SOUNDS FAMILIAR.

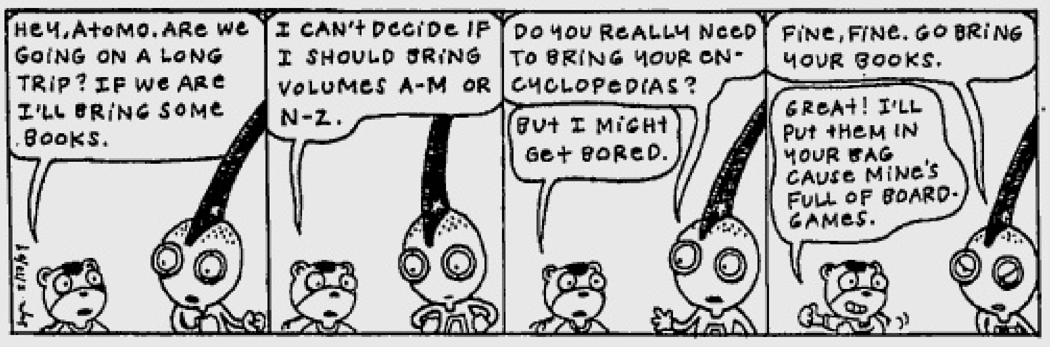
BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


I HATE GETTING PUNISHED.
YEAH, IT'S WEIRD NOT GETTING TO WATCH TV.
BUT THIS GAME ISN'T TOO BAD. IN FACT, IT'S SORT OF FUN.
I THINK SO, TOO.
...FIVE, SIX, SEVEN!
I WIN!
AAARRGH! HA! HA! HA!
LET'S GET PUNISHED AGAIN TOMORROW!

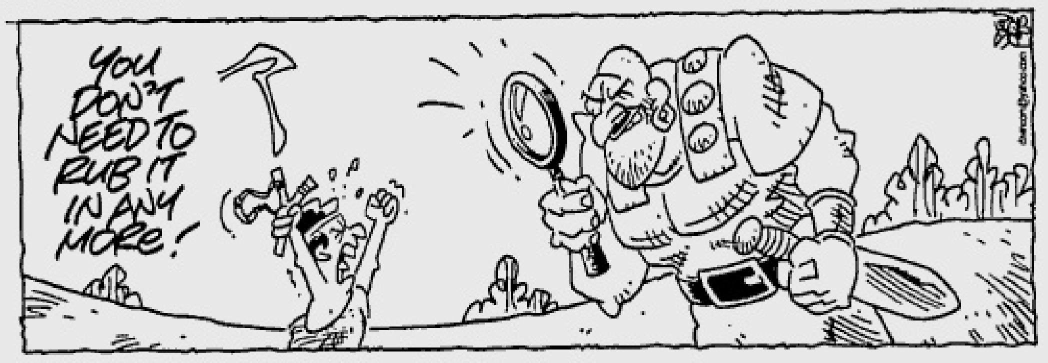
MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


SHNIFF SNIFF SNIFF SNIFF SHNIFF SNIFF SNIFF
WHERE ARE YOU GOING, EARL?
SNIFF
I DUNNO...
SNIFF SHNIFF
I'M WAITING FOR MY NOSE TO TELL ME
mutts comics.com
2-17

ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


HEY, ATOMO. ARE WE GOING ON A LONG TRIP? IF WE ARE I'LL BRING SOME BOOKS.
I CAN'T DECIDE IF I SHOULD BRING VOLUMES A-M OR N-Z.
DO YOU REALLY NEED TO BRING YOUR ENCYCLOPEDIAS?
BUT I MIGHT GET BORED.
FINE, FINE. GO BRING YOUR BOOKS.
GREAT! I'LL PUT THEM IN YOUR BAG CAUSE MINE'S FULL OF BOARD-GAMES.

DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS


YOU DON'T NEED TO RUB IT IN ANY MORE!

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're curious and inventive. You have originality because you're capable of thinking out of the box. Your ingenuity combined with your imagination creates interesting worlds for you. Freedom is important to you. You love nature. Major changes will take place in your life this year.
Birthdate of: Michael Jordan, basketball player; Denise Richards, actress; Hal Holbrook, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Do something that improves your relationships with co-workers today. Remember: This is the year that you will fantastically improve your employment scene!

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Make plans for a vacation this year, if you can. Creative activities, working with children, anything having to do with the arts, plus love and romance get the green light this year!

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Look for opportunities to expand your living quarters, or even to speculate on real estate. In the months ahead, your family situation will become warmer and more beneficial to you.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Our lives can expand or shrink according to our dreams. This year your dreams are bold and wonderful! That's why you are starting down a new path now.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Your earnings are favored this year. Follow up on your money-making ideas, because you can attract money and new jobs now. Expect a miracle.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Once every 12 years, you are favored with lucky Jupiter in your sign. That year has arrived! Have faith in the people and opportunities that come your way now.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): It's important to know what to let go of and what to keep. You see clearly what is working and what is not working in your life. Don't be afraid to make decisions that change your world.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Your popularity is strong now! Everyone wants to be in your presence. Clubs, organizations and associations court you. Enjoy this while it lasts.

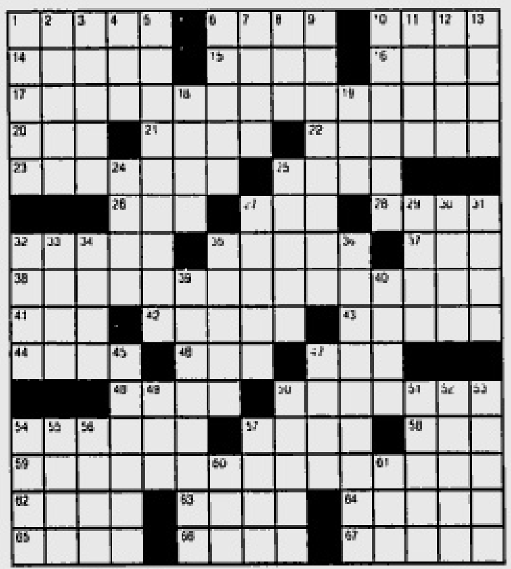
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Although you might be getting along on less in some respects, your career is beautifully favored this year. A year from now, support from your partner will increase.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): This is a good time to go back to school or to consider serious travel plans. The months ahead will offer you many opportunities to do both. (You might as well get on the bandwagon right away.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): The resources of others favor you now. Expect loans, mortgages, gifts, increased credit and possibly bonuses through your partner. Alphabetize your blessings!

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Your partnerships will run more smoothly this year than they have for a long time. This applies to close friendships as well. Enjoy these dear times with your loved ones.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By James E. Buell
Edgewater, FL
2/17/04

ACROSS
1 Dukes
6 Loaf
10 Cut away
14 In the dark
15 Fanciful notion
16 Old World continent
17 Up the dream
20 Be master of
21 Tarzan's friends
22 Pluck
23 Course of physical training
25 Composer Stravinsky
26 Open container
27 __-la-la
28 Trade
32 Downhill racer
35 Damp
37 Rock producer Brian
38 Up the enthusiasm
41 FDR opponent Landon
42 V-shaped cut
43 Creepy
44 "Around the world" toy
46 __ culpa (Sorry 'bout that)
47 Hole in one
48 Shakespearean king
50 Kind of strike
54 Casual top
57 Voila!
58 Slugger's stat
59 Up the mind-set
62 Miff
63 Old-fashioned oath
64 Bamboo lover
65 Little rascals
66 Fishing poles
67 Iron alloy

DOWN
1 Frenzy
2 Dumbfounded
3 Supporting loop
4 "__ the season..."
5 Pressing need
6 Common shower gift
7 Poetic tributes
8 Paul of guitars
9 Point of death
10 Beepers
11 U.S. tennis stadium
12 Nabisco cracker
13 Let up
18 Frank
19 "Sands of __ Jima"
24 Skeptic's retort
25 Type of whiskey
27 Puccini opera
29 "The Truman Show" director Peter
30 Freeze preceder?
31 Sit for a shot
32 Do in
33 Metric meas.
34 Maybe, maybe not
35 Poetic measure
36 Windsor stays
39 Regardless of
40 Marsh grass
45 Martini garnishes
47 Assistant
49 Time of note
50 Magic staffs
51 Old battle-ax
52 Dwelling
53 Kind of pool or wave
54 Garr or Hatcher
55 Meager
56 "Hard Day's Night" follow-up
57 Warty amphibian
60 Self-regard
61 Wrestling surface

Monday's Puzzle Solved

A	W	A	S	H	■	T	A	S	S	O	■	F	O	E
C	E	L	L	O	■	I	C	I	E	R	■	L	A	M
T	R	A	I	L	B	L	A	Z	E	R	■	A	R	C
S	E	N	D	E	R	■	D	E	N	■	S	M	E	E
■	■	■	E	D	U	C	E	S	■	S	U	E	D	E
E	L	M	■	■	T	A	M	■	B	U	M	P	■	■
L	E	A	P	S	■	M	E	N	A	T	A	R	M	S
E	N	T	I	T	L	E	■	A	I	R	C	O	O	L
V	I	C	T	R	O	L	A	S	■	A	S	O	N	E
■	■	H	I	E	S	■	S	T	P	■	■	F	A	D
R	E	S	E	W	■	S	K	Y	L	A	B	■	■	■
O	R	T	S	■	R	C	A	■	A	L	I	C	I	A
U	R	I	■	B	U	R	N	I	N	G	B	U	S	H
S	O	C	■	A	B	A	C	K	■	E	L	E	N	A
E	L	K	■	T	E	P	E	E	■	R	E	S	T	S

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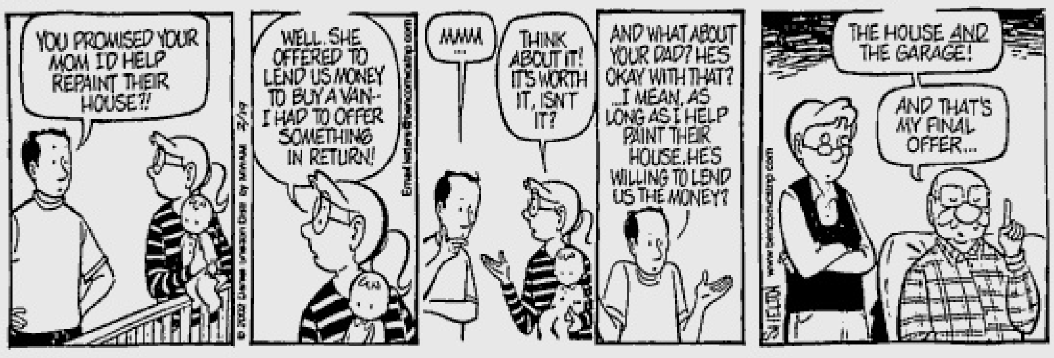
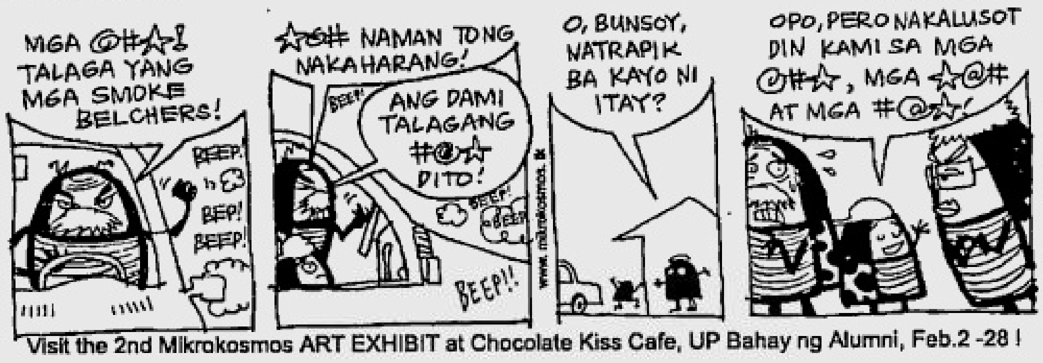
2/17/04

BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


YOU PROMISED YOUR MOM I'D HELP REPAINT THEIR HOUSE?!
WELL, SHE OFFERED TO LEND US MONEY TO BUY A VAN- I HAD TO OFFER SOMETHING IN RETURN!
MMM...
THINK ABOUT IT! IT'S WORTH IT, ISN'T IT?
AND WHAT ABOUT YOUR DAD? HE'S OKAY WITH THAT? ...I MEAN, AS LONG AS I HELP PAINT THEIR HOUSE, HE'S WILLING TO LEND US THE MONEY?
THE HOUSE AND THE GARAGE!
AND THAT'S MY FINAL OFFER...

MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


MGA @#☆! TALAGA YANG MGA SMOKE BELCHERS!
BEEP! BEP! BEEP!
☆@# NAMAN TONG NAKAHARANG!
ANG DAMI TALAGANG #@☆ DITO!
BEEP!!
O, BUNSOY, NATRAPIK BA KAYO NI ITAY?
OPO, PERO NAKALUSOT DIN KAMI SA MGA @#☆, MGA ☆@# AT MGA #@☆!
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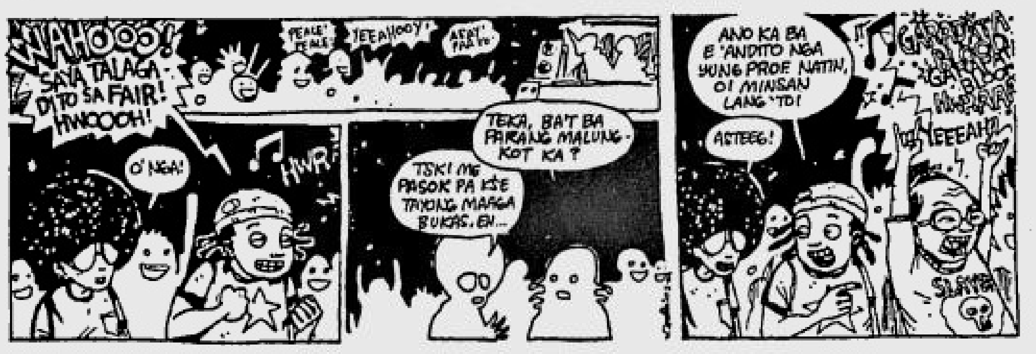
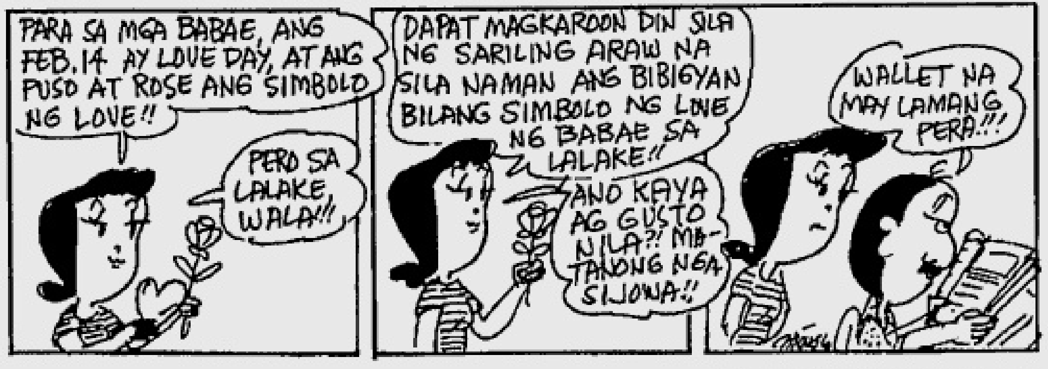
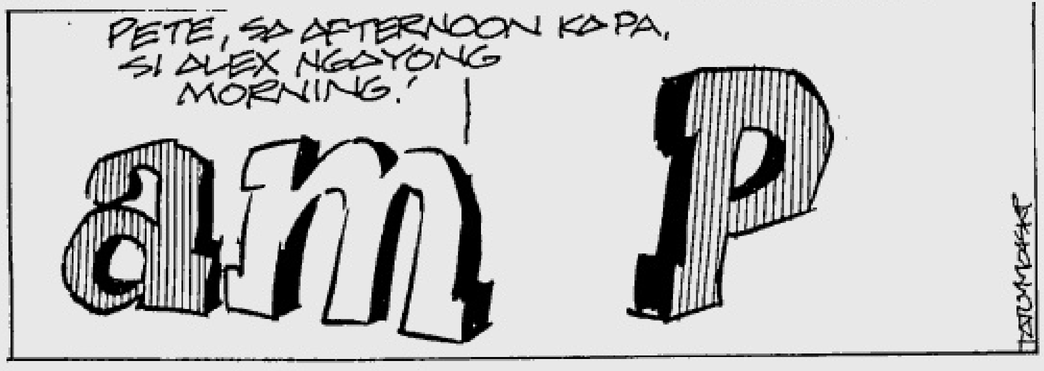
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


WAHOOO! SAYA TALAGA DITO SA FAIR! HWOOOH!
O' NGA!
HWR!
TEKA, BAT BA PARANG MALUNGKOT KA?
TSK! MAY PASOK PA KSE TAYONG MAAGA BUKAS, EH...
ANO KA BA E 'ANDITO NGA YUNG PROF NATIN, O! MINSAN LANG 'TO!
ASTEEG!
YEEEAH!!

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


PARA SA MGA BABAE, ANG FEB.14 AY LOVE DAY, AT ANG PUSO AT ROSE ANG SIMBOLO NG LOVE!!
PERO SA LALAKE, WALA!!
DAPAT MAGKAROON DIN SILA NG SARILING ARAW NA SILA NAMAN ANG BIBIGYAN BILANG SIMBOLO NG LOVE NG BABAE SA LALAKE!!
ANO KAYA AG GUSTO NILA?! MATANONG NGA SIJOWA!!
WALLET NA MAY LAMANG PERA!!!

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


PETE, SA AFTERNOON KA PA, SI ALEX NGAYONG MORNING.'
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SM CINEMA

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SM CITY NORTH EDSA
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1 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
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3 MILAN
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5 MILAN
6 WISHING STAIRS
7 CHASING LIBERTY
8 LAST SAMURAI

SM CITY CEBU
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1 LAST SAMURAI
2 STUCK ON YOU
3 BROTHER BEAR
4 MONA LISA SMILE
5 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
6 MILAN
7 MILAN
8 TWINS EFFECT

SM CITY BACOOR
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1 A GOOD LAWYER'S WIFE
2 HAUNTED MANSION
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4 MILAN
5 CHASING LIBERTY
6 MILAN
7 MAGIC KITCHEN
8 WISHING STAIRS

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2 MILAN
3 BROTHER BEAR
4 LAST SAMURAI

SM SUPER CTR. SUCAT
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1 CHASING LIBERTY
2 HAUNTED MANSION
3 MILAN
4 WISHING STAIRS

SM BICUTAN
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2 HAUNTED MANSION
3 MILAN
4 WISHING STAIRS

SM CITY BAGUIO
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1 MONA LISA SMILE
2 THE GRUDGE
3 MILAN
4 STUCK ON YOU

SM STA. MESA
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1 MILAN
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4 WISHING STAIRS
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8 SHIRI
9 MILAN
10 A GOOD LAWYER'S WIFE

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3 CHASING LIBERTY
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5 SHIRI
6 LAST SAMURAI
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8 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
9 MILAN
10 A GOOD LAWYER'S WIFE

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
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1 SHIRI
2 A GOOD LAWYER'S WIFE
3 IN THE CUT
4 LAST SAMURAI
5 MAGIC KITCHEN
6 MILAN
7 CHASING LIBERTY
8 HAUNTED MANSION
9 MILAN
10 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
11 I AM DINA
12 BROTHER BEAR

SM CITY MARILAO

1 DIABLO
2 MILAN
3 STUCK ON YOU
4 HAUNTED MANSION

SM CITY ILOILO
3209422

1 MEMENTO MORI
2 RESERVED
3 MILAN
4 BROTHER BEAR
5 STUCK ON YOU
6 LAST SAMURAI
7 RESERVED
8 HAUNTED OFFICE

SM MEGAMALL
6331901

1 I AM DINA
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3 MAGIC KITCHEN
4 CHASING LIBERTY
5 HAUNTED MANSION
6 A GOOD LAWYER'S WIFE
7 SHIRI
8 WISHING STAIRS
9 MILAN
10 MILAN
11 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
12 MAGIC KITCHEN

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2 CHASING LIBERTY
3 MILAN
4 WISHING STAIRS

SM CITY MANILA
5239240

1 CHASING LIBERTY
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5 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
6 LAST SAMURAI
7 A GOOD LAWYER'S WIFE
8 SHIRI
9 MILAN
10 WISHING STAIRS
11 MAGIC KITCHEN
12 MILAN

SM CITY DAVAO
2974998

1 MILAN
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3 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
4 TWINS EFFECT
5 MONA LISA SMILE
6 STUCK ON YOU

SM CITY PAMPANGA
7128015

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2 STUCK ON YOU
3 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
4 IN THE CUT
5 MILAN
6 MILAN

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1 BROTHER BEAR
2 MILAN
3 THE GRUDGE
4 LAST SAMURAI

—THE— PODIUM CINEMA

1 HAUNTED MANSION
12:00 FS/12:35
MF/2:40/4:45/10:30
LFS/11:00 LMF/12:30
END

2 CHASING LIBERTY
11:10 FS/11:30
MF/1:50/4:10/10:30
LFS/11:00 LMF/1:00
END

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2 CHASING LIBERTY	2 WISHING STAIRS	2 MILAN	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 2 MONA LISA SMILE 2:00	2 MILAN
3 MILAN	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 3 CHASING LIBERTY 12:30, 3:00, 5:30, 8:00, 10:30	Onstage REPERTORY'S FAME Feb. 20, 21, 22, 27, 28, 29, Mar. 6 & 7	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 THE LAST SAMURAI 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 9:30	3 MILAN
4 HAUNTED MANSION	4 MONA LISA SMILE		GUARANTEED SEATS 4 CHASING LIBERTY 1:20, 3:50, 6:20, 8:50, 11:20	4 HAUNTED MANSION
	5 MAGIC KITCHEN		GUARANTEED SEATS 5 HAUNTED MANSION 12:30, 2:30, 4:30, 4:15, 8:30, 10:30	5 MONAL LISA SMILE
	6 MILAN			
	7 MILAN			

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5 GOLD (DOLBY) MONA LIZA SMILE
6 GOLD (SDDS) HAUNTED MANSION
7 GOLD (DOLBY) TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
8 [illegible] MAGIC KITCHEN
9 [illegible] BROTHER BEAR
10 [illegible] WISHING STAIRS

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1 (DOLBY) MILAN
2 (DOLBY) CHASING LIBERTY
3 (DOLBY) HAUNTED MANSION
4 (DOLBY) MONALISA SMILE

Masagana CINEMA
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1 MILAN
2 HAUNTED MANSION
3 MAGIC KITCHEN

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(Mandaluyong) tel 724.4986

1 MILAN
2 PURI
3 CHASING LIBERTY
HAUNTED MANSION
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) WISHING STAIRS
5

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4 MILAN
5 HAUNTED MANSION
6 CHASING LIBERTY

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(Las Pinas)
tel 873.5004

1 MILAN
2 HAUNTED MANSION

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Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007

1 LAST SAMURAI
2 KILL BILL

Sunshine
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1 MILAN
2 HAUNTED MANSION
3 MOUNSTER SHARK
4

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8 (SDDS)
9 (DOLBY)

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2 MILAN
3 MILAN
4 (SDDS) IN THE CUT
5 MAGIC KITCHEN
6 (DOLBY) HAUNTED MANSION
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9 GOOD LAWYER'S WIFE

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3 (DTS)
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5

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2 MILAN
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2 CHASING LIBERTY
3 RESERVE
4 MILAN
5 WISHING STAIRS

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1 MILAN
2 DIABLO

THE CENTER OF ENTERTAINMENT
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1 MILAN
2 WISHING STAIRE
3 (DOLBY DIGITAL) HAUNTD MANSION
4 (SDDS) CHASING LIBERTY
5 (DTS) LAST SAMURAI
6 MAGIC KITCHEN
7 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

Jade Cinema
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1 (DOLBY EX) HAUNTED MANSION
2 MILAN
3 (DTS ES) STUCK ON YOU
4 DIABLO

Cine Nepo
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1 MILAN
2 THE GATHERING
3 (DOLBY) HAUNTED MANSION
4 (DTS) STUCK ON YOU

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489

1 MILAN
2 TWO WEEKS NOTICE/WHAT A GIRL WANTS
3 SWEPT AWAY/MAID IN MANHATTAN
4 (DTS) STUCK ON YOU

CINEMA 2000

Cinema 2000 Target Mall
(Sta. Rosa, Laguna) tel (049) 837.0926

1 CHASING LIBERTY
2 MILAN
3 (DTS) HAUNTED MANSION

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383

1 MILAN
2 (DTS) MILAN
3 (DOLBY) HAUNTED MANSION
4 CHASING LIBERTY

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146

1 MILAN
2 (DOLBY) HAUNTED MANSION
3 (DTS) CHASING LIBERTY
4 MILAN

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771

1 TWINS EFFECTS
2 MILAN
3 (DOLBY) LAST SAMURAI

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729

1 MILAN
2 MILAN
3 (DOLBY) DIABLO
4 (DTS) LAST SAMURAI

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795-3320

1 STUCK ON YOU
2 MILAN
3 MILAN

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276

1 (SDDS) PURI
2 DIABLO
3 HAUNTED MANSION
4 (DTS) MILAN

Lianas MovieCity
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1 (DOLBY) HAUNTED MANSION
2 CHAISING LIBERTY
3 (DTS) MILAN
4 BIBINGKA
5 IN THE CUT

Olivarez Tri-Cinema
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1 CHASING LIBERTY
2 MILAN

Olivarez Los Baños
tel (049) 249.2558

1 HAUNTED MANSION
2 MILAN
3 CHAISING LIBERTY

Mega Center Mall
(Cabanatuan City) tel (044) 463.3283

1 THE GATHERING
2 BROTHER BEAR
3 (DTS) LAST SAMURAI
4 (DOLBY) MILAN

Cabuyao
(Laguna City) tel 520.8914

1 (DTS) RESERVE

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790

1 STUCK ON YOU
2 DIABLO
3 LAST SAMURAI
4 MILAN

Emperor
(Rosario Cavite) tel (046) 438.1657

1 PURI
2 MILAN

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FESTIVAL CINEMA
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Festival Supermall
Filinvest - Alabang

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julia roberts
mona lisa smile

NOW SHOWING

Perimeter of the people . . .

From page A24

Host: Good, so you know him very well. Can you share with us what is your inside into his personality?

(*Huwag na lang kaya...*)

***

Host: The wedding gown you designed for the bride was really special! Did you have a hard time designing it?

Guest: Well, frankly speaking, that special gown was the product of a lot of tedious conceptualation!

(*Ay*, tedious conceptualation!)

***

Arts Congress

THE CCP, the NCCA and the Film Development Council of the Philippines invites you to an Arts Congress from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Feb. 19 at the Folk Arts Theater.

The congress, "Kilos Kultura Para sa Kinabukasan," will gather cultural workers, arts manager, researchers, scholars and art educators to set medium-term goals for the art and culture sector, and to determine areas of cooperation among government and non-government agencies, institutions and organizations.

Despite its voting power of around two million, the artists' sector needs to consolidate itself to be recognized by political leaders as a force to contend with. Thus, the congress will invite the presidential candidates at different times of the day, for each of them to present their respective platforms for arts and culture, and to get artists' inputs.

Artists and art lovers are also invited to the launching of "Asya 2004 sa CCP" at 5 p.m. on Feb. 19 at the CCP Front Lawn.

'Sungdu-an'

ONGOING at the CCP's Main Gallery is "Sungdu-an," an exhibition presenting a wide array of expressions of the complex realities of Philippine culture, as interpreted by artists of various orientations, from different parts of the country.

"Sungdu-an" will be on view until March 25. Call 832-3702.

Jolina's . . .

From page A24

Record award that Jolina had received.

GMA Records continues to herald Jolina as its banner artist for its initial offering, "Jolina Forever." The newly launched album presents Jolina in a new light. She is more mature here and more expressive, but has the same crystal-clear voice that soars to reach high notes.

Jolina's star will be shining brighter this year.

With two regular shows on GMA—the weekend-concert TV, "SOP," and the weeknight drama, "Narito Ang Puso Ko," and an upcoming movie, Jolina has every reason to feel fulfilled.

Her countless achievements and recognition, not only in show biz but also in society, also show Jolina as a prime example of the youth with a social responsibility and a conscience.

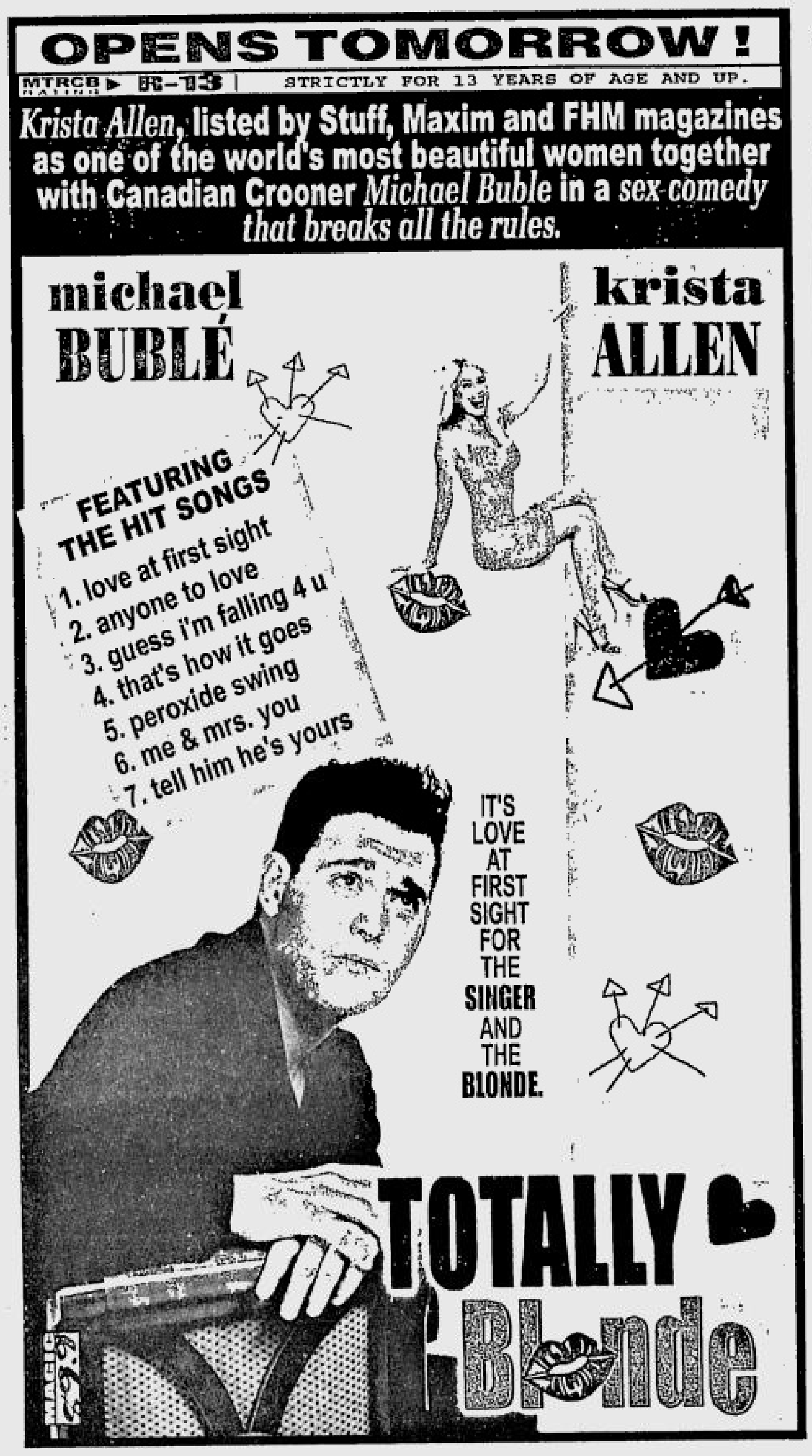
Tuesday Vargas at Music Museum

SINGER Tuesday Vargas will rock the entertainment scene on Thursday with her first solo stand-up comedy concert, "Habulin Nyo Ako!—Tuesday Vargas."

The show at the Music Museum is directed by Al Tantay.

Recognized by the Philippine Movie Press Club as one of today's best new TV personalities, Tuesday is a talent of ABS-CBN.

Ticket prices are P1000, P800 and P600. For reservations, call Music Museum at 721-6726, Ticket World at 891-9999 or call or text 0917-793158.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Krista Allen, listed by Stuff, Maxim and FHM magazines as one of the world's most beautiful women together with Canadian Crooner *Michael Buble* in a *sex comedy that breaks all the rules.*

michael BUBLÉ
krista ALLEN

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1. love at first sight
2. anyone to love
3. guess i'm falling 4 u
4. that's how it goes
5. peroxide swing
6. me & mrs. you
7. tell him he's yours

IT'S LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT FOR THE SINGER AND THE BLONDE.

TOTALLY Blonde

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EVER WISHED THAT YOU WERE DEAD?
Wishing Stairs

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Ali 1	MILAN
Ali 2	MILAN
Ali 3	THE HAUNTED MANSION
Ali 4	CHASING LIBERTY
Ali 5	LAST SAMURAI
Ali 6	MAGIC KITCHEN
Ali 7	THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

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ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY "LEGEND OF CROCODILE

QUEZON CITY

ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	POSSESSION / HUBOG
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR

NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA

A	MILAN
B	
C	

MANDALUYONG CITY

SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION

CAINTA RIZAL

STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	MILAN
CINEMA-2	LAST SAMURAI
CINEMA-3	GOOD LAWYER'S WIFE
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	MONALISA SMILE
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	BROTHER BEAR
CINEMA-6	TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSCRE
CINEMA-7	LOLLIPOP
CINEMA-8	IN THE CUT
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	CHASING LIBERTY
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	HAUNTED MANSION
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	MAGIC KITCHEN
CINEMA-12	WISHING STAIRS
CINEMA-14	MILAN
CINEMA-15	MILAN

LORES

CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT

NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN

(LAS PINAS)	LAST SAMURAI
CINEMA-1	MILAN
CINEMA-2	BROTHER BEAR
CINEMA-4	GATHERING

UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL

(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

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AYALA CENTER

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Tunay na Pag-ibig... Tunay na Pagkakaibigan...
Samahang Walang Iwanan...
Minsan Lang 'To... Puwedeng Panghabambuhay...
AUBREY MILES
MAXENE MAGALONA CHYNNA ORTALEZA ANGEL LOCSIN
COGIE DOMINGO DANILO BARRIOS JAMES BLANCO OYO BOY SOTTO RAILEY VALEROSO
and RICHARD GUTIERREZ
kuya
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CINEMA 2	**CHASING LIBERTY** 11:05, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 9:50 **P13**

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1	**MILAN** 10:50, 1:40, 4:30 7:20, 10:10 PG-13
2	**CHASING LIBERTY** 11:20, 2:05, 4:50 7:35, 10:20 PG-13
3	**HAUNTED MANSION** 11:30, 1:30, 3:30 5:30, 7:30, 9:30 GP
4	**MONA LISA SMILE** 12:15, 2:55, 5:35 8:15, 10:50 PG-13

Doesn't sound like Greek to us

By Constantino C. Tejero

BENNY Andersson and Bjorn Ulvaeus of Abba: "This is the musical we never knew we had written."

ON A tiny Greek island, a wedding is about to take place.

When the bride-to-be starts to speak, it doesn't sound like Greek to us, and when all the others speak, there's not even an attempt to sound like Greek. All we hear is a quasi-British accent and a smattering of Aussie idiom.

But then one woman addresses a despondent friend and we hear a Hispanic name. When, ever so slowly, she starts singing "Chiquitita," it is like the unfurling of the petals of a Spanish rose.

The title of the show itself is Italian, not to say that certain characters and situations resemble those in Tennessee Williams' "The Rose Tattoo." So we tell ourselves this must be the Latin Quarters of New South Wales.

Multicultural, universal

This, in fact, is the Sydney production of the smash hit musical "Mamma Mia!" of Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus, and it sounds somewhat multicultural. As it's based on the songs of the Swedish band Abba, the rhythm, timbre and sentiments of the songs unavoidably add a Northwestern European inflection to the compound.

REVIEW

As well it should be, as the story itself is universal. That is, it can happen on an islet on the Mediterranean as well as in an island-continent near the South Pole.

This is the story of fatherless Sophie Sheridan (played by Kellie Rode) who, three months before her marriage to Sky (Christopher Parker), invites to her wedding her mother Donna's (Margi de Ferranti) three ex-lovers. She is convinced one of them is her father, and she has to find out who, so he could give her away.

The three men—Sam Carmichael (Bruce Roberts), Harry Bright (John O'May) and Bill Austin (Glen Hogstrom)—arrive the day before the wedding. Confusion ensues, old emotions rush back, reversals are in order.

Will Sophie find her father? Will Donna find her true love? Will the wedding take place?

This is the stuff of Shakespeare and Molière, if not of Plautus and Menander.

Rich tapestry

Our befuddlement during the opening scenes gives way to thrill over the unfolding story and exhilaration after each song. All the Abba favorites are here, except for "Waterloo" and "Fernando" (they have no place in the plot).

The rich tapestry resulting from the weaving of 22 Abba songs together is a surprising instance of seamless plotting. As Ulvaeus said at one time, "This is the musical we never knew we had written."

The storyline is plausible, and there's a sense of inevitability in the choice of songs used for every dramatic situation. As interwoven in the narrative, each song makes perfect sense, that is, it is in context, as if it was written after the story was conceived instead of the other way around.

This is so much finer than Michael Schultz's 1978 movie "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" (starring Peter Frampton and The Bee Gees, with its embarrassing attempt to link songs from The Beatles album into a narrative that doesn't quite hold).

Or than any similar productions, for that matter, including the Burt Bacharach pastiche, the Paul McCartney vanity production "Give My Regards to Broad Street," even Baz Luhrmann's "Moulin Rouge," and—if we count The Village People's romp with Bruce Jenner—"Can't Stop the Music."

What we've seen is a life-affirming show replete with lusty performances, rumbustious humor, poignant moments and infectious music.

The performances are uniformly good, including the ensemble, and especially Emma Powell as Donna's sassy friend Rosie. Worth citing, too, are the perky choreography by Anthony van Laast and the ingenious production design by Mark Thompson.

With a show this robust and full of mirth, one never notices nearly three hours have passed. Not when the entire audience rises to its feet as one, claps and waves hands during the encores.

A loud chorus of acclaim should go to director Phyllida Lloyd for pulling this off. (She's renowned for her work at Britain's Royal National Theatre and international opera productions.)

The librettist is no pasticheuse, either. She's award-winning British playwright Catherine Johnson, who spent more than two years shaping the story and reshaping the songs to fit the story, to come up with the book for a "contemporary, ironic, cross-generational comedy-romance."

> The longest-running show in Sydney is replete with lusty performances, rumbustious humor, poignant moments and infectious music

KELLY Rode as the fatherless bride in Abba musical

Global phenomenon

And, of course, there's Abba, a band that was no less than phenomenal. (The name is composed of the initials of the first names of band members Agnetha Faltskog, Benny Andersson, Björn Ulvaeus and Anni-Frid Lyngstad.)

The group's chart domination of Europe was said to be "unequivocal—with, at the time, only the Rolling Stones, Elvis Presley and The Beatles having achieved longer runs of Top 10 singles."

Their truly global success, "Dancing Queen," was No. 1 in 13 countries. Even in Zimbabwe, they scored 13 singles on the Top 10 and eight albums soared to No. 1. To date, they have sold 350-million records worldwide.

One of the finest tributes came from Bono of U2, when he declared them "one of the best pop groups that ever were."

Though they had long disbanded, their ebullient music still enthralls people, including a whole new generation of fans. Andersson and Ulvaeus' first musical "Chess," written with Tim Rice, produced the two hit singles "One Night in Bangkok" and "I Know Him So Well."

The Abba revival reportedly started in Australia in the 1990s. Their songs were prominently featured in such Australian films as "Muriel's Wedding" and "Priscilla, Queen of the Desert."

Thus, the idea for this musical. Producer Judy Craymer had a dream. She was convinced a musical could be created from the songs Abba was singing.

When the musical premiered in London in April 1999, it took London by storm. Said one report: "Traffic in central London came to a standstill for the world-premiere performance, as celebrities and critics poured into the Prince Edward Theatre. The reception was rapturous... It went on to break every known box-office record and is still playing to standing-room only eight times a week."

The musical opened in Toronto a year later, and had a US tour, followed by productions on Broadway and in Australia. It premiered in Sydney on Sept. 26, 2002.

It went on to become the longest-running show in Australia, performed in Lyric Theatre at Star City, Sydney's entertainment center. (What we saw was one of the nine productions playing in three continents around the world.)

As Time magazine gushes: "'Mamma Mia!' brings happiness wherever it goes!"

Thank you for the music...

For soul singer, romance has to wait

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

SINGER **Nina** has clarified that she cut cleanly from S.O.P. before moving to its rival show, A.S.A.P.

"It was my manager's decision since she felt that there wasn't enough room for me in S.O.P. But we explained our side to the management and they got our point. So there's no truth to all the talks that I left without formality and all," Nina explained.

The soul siren also shrugged off rumors that she had become big-headed.

"My family and friends from way back can attest to the fact that I haven't changed," she said. "All that has changed is my schedule. I just happen to be busier now. But every chance I get I spend with them."

I take her word for it because even with newfound friends like me, Nina seems so unaffected by her fame. What's more when she's dealing with her old friends? Although her songs are so heartfelt, she claims that her love life is zero at the moment.

"Romance has to wait for now," she declared.

When teased about **Jimmy Bondoc** Nina only laughed loudly and said, "We never had anything in the first place. Work just brought us real close. If I had my way I'd rather have a boyfriend who's not a musician so our different worlds would merge. But when love hits *naman*, it's beyond our control who we fall for."

With all the fans falling for her music, success has gone out-of-control for Nina!

Prom rituals

I had a grand time as a guest in "Sis" during its prom episode which will be aired on Friday, Feb. 20. Other guests were **Wilma Doesnt, Harlene Bautista, Sheryln Reynes, Diego Llorico** and **Mark Herras**. We all felt like high school students again as we reenacted our prom rituals. We even wore gowns (except for Mark) and danced the waltz for maximum impact!

I would rather not preempt the episode so I'll just give you a teaser.

Wilma, who's now one of the most sought-after models, was once an ugly duckling. Her prom was quite a nightmare for her!

As for Sheryln, her mom had chosen her date for her. She couldn't attend the prom with whomever her boyfriend was at that time.

Harlene ended up shouldering most of the expenses of their batch's prom.

Diego confessed that his biggest frustration was not being able to wear a gown during his prom because he was still a closet queen back then. He gamely admitted that he was named the Prom King. Even during his high school days, Mark was apparently star material already. I just noticed that he needs to be a little more buff so he can be more appealing.

As for myself, my major prom woe was having the most popular matinee idol at that time as my date. He also happened to be my boyfriend throughout my high school.

It was fun for all of us to relive our prom.

Before the cameras started rolling, Wilma, Harlene and I swapped motherhood anecdotes. When I asked Wilma who her baby looks like, she nonchalantly replied, "*Ako! Di nagmana sa dad niya! Si* Onemig *nga ba? hahaha!*"

To this day no one knows who is the kid's dad. His identity has been kept a well-guarded secret. But some quarters are pointing at Onemig Bondoc as the father. Only Wilma knows for sure. But with the way she blurted out Onemig's name, it would seem that there was already something in her psyche that she still had to face. But then again, it could have been the comedian in her laughing at herself.

Having its cake and eating it

I wrote in a previous column that talk is circulating that "Eat Bulaga" might move to ABC-5. I heard recently that the reason for the move is that GMA-7 wants to ease out "E.B." (produced by TAPE) and produce its own noontime show. The name of the game is not only ratings but also earnings. Probably, GMA-7 wants to have its cake and eat it too. Talk about the sweet taste of success, but isn't it sweeter when it is shared?

NINA

More TV movements

How true are reports that ABS-CBN's "Klasmeyts" will soon fold up because GMA 7's "Nuts Entertainment" has clobbered it in the ratings game? It has been "seesaw" in the ratings chart for most rival shows. When one is up, the other is down. And with so much imitation going on, what you might see in one channel might be something you already saw in another station.

Paolo Contis is said to be moving to GMA-7 soon. Among showbiz folk, it's either you're a "kapamilya" or a "kapuso." But if one is truly family or if one really belongs to one heart, nothing should be able to lure one to jump to the other side of the fence?

Reader's corner:

I read your article on **Niño Muhlach** and I was surprised to learn that there's another *mestiza* named '**Candy**' apart from the girl he was with at the Club John Hay Manor Hotel sometime last January. This girl is definitely not his wife, who I've seen on television, and definitely not the 'Candy' you wrote about since you said she was a *mestiza*. My husband and I saw them shopping at an overrun shop in John Hay. They were so sweet to each other. The young girl is in her 20s. She was dressed in very, very short pants, fitted undershirt and a trendy jacket. The weather was freezing that night.

I was just so disappointed to see Niño with another woman after all the "drama" he he did in front of the camera just to make his wife believe that he had been going straight. Now, after reading your article, I pity the guy, especially after learning that there's another woman aside from his wife and his lover in Baguio. There must be something more than just and "itch" in him.

The letter was signed **Nicole**.

Mraz at Dish

Catch **Jason Mraz** in a more intimate acoustic session at Dish Rockwell on Friday, Feb. 20. Entitled "Proximity," the show will have **Paolo Santos** as special guest.

"Proximity" is presented by PLDT.

For ticket inquiries, call 8981771 0r 8981824

For feedback, E-mail friends_elpueblo@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaithband.com

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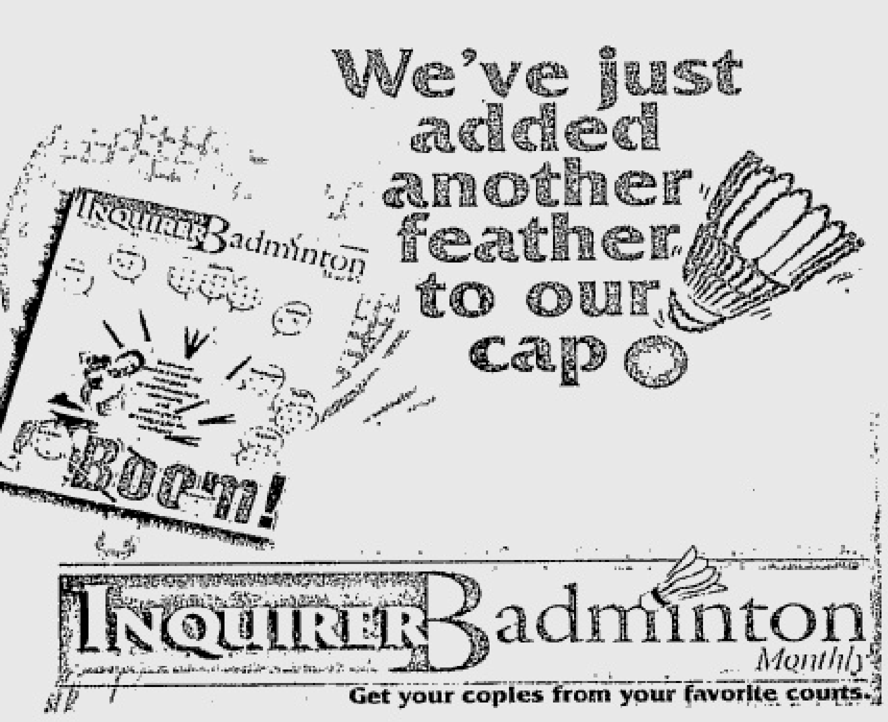

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Editor Louie C. Camino

Arnel Ignacio's switch to Channel 2 breaks longtime friendship

By Marinel R. Cruz

ARNEL IGNACIO: Wilma is not just boss but also good friend.

WHEN comedian and television game show host Arnel Ignacio moved to ABS-CBN, his longtime friendship with GMA 7 vice president for entertainment Wilma Galvante was also severed.

This was what Arnel told INQUIRER Entertainment during a press gathering yesterday.

But Arnel said the crack in their friendship was "only slight" and was soon mended.

"Wilma Galvante was not just my boss. She was my friend," Arnel said. "I know she's not happy, but there are decisions that I have to make for my family's sake."

He said leaving the network that gave him big breaks was hard enough. But saying goodbye to the people who believed in his talent was even harder to do.

P1-million paycheck

The comedian signed a one-year contract with ABS-CBN yesterday to host the new noontime show that is set to replace "Masayang Tanghali Bayan" on Feb. 21.

His paycheck is reportedly P1 million a month.

Arnel said he had met with Galvante days before he signed his new contract.

"I told her that moving to the other channel was the hardest decision I had to make so far."

Now that he is part of the network, Arnel is worried about meeting the expectations of his new bosses.

"I'm not too pressured about what the reaction of the audience might be. *Kabisado ko na kasi ang kiliti nila* (I already know how to please them)," he explained.

He is also confident that with him hosting the show, ABS-CBN will not have trouble with the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board.

"I have kids of my own, that's why I'm not too comfortable with green jokes myself," he said.

ABS-CBN terminated the contract of Willie Revillame as host of "Masayang Tanghali Bayan" after he supposedly again "uttered offensive remarks" on the show.

The network's decision to terminate Revillame's contract was prompted by a complaint made from the MTRCB about the host's use of double-meaning jokes. It was the third time Revillame was punished for vulgar behavior.

Included in Arnel's contract are a sitcom and a movie from Star Cinema, according to his talent manager, Wyngard Tracy.

Reunion with friend Ai-Ai

Tracy said Arnel is also considering an offer to be a part of a show on ABC 5.

"I already asked the permission of ABS-CBN," said Tracy. "I'm sure the network would agree because the show would have an entirely different concept anyway."

On Feb. 21, Arnel will be hosting the newly reformatted noontime show with Ai-Ai de las Alas, Edu Manzano and Mickey Ferriols.

"I was told that ABS-CBN hired me because Ai-Ai needed a sparring partner," Ignacio said.

"The two of us have been friends for as long as I can remember. I think the good rapport will show on TV," he added.

Hosting a noontime show is nothing new to Arnel. He used to host "Chibugan Na" on RPN 9 after he left Pepe Pimentel's "Kuwarta o Kahon" also on RPN 9.

He also worked as a writer of ABS-CBN's "Tatak Pilipino" in the early '90s.

Jolina's new role: Model for the youth

SHOW TIME

THE PHILIPPINE government recently appointed young artist Jolina Magdangal as its official spokesperson for the youth and has bestowed on her the coveted Youth Role Model Award.

Jolina has also received the medal of honor from the National Youth Commission for being an outstanding youth role model. She is now the commission's official National Youth Advocate.

On top of all this, Jolina has remained one of the country's most popular young singers. Thousands of Filipino listeners, including those living abroad, couldn't get enough of Jolina's songs, which continue to dominate airwaves and break record charts.

Her popularity impacted in the eight Gold Record awards, three Platinum Record awards, four Double Platinum Record awards, and the rarely attained Quintuple Platinum

JOLINA'S/A21

Perimeter of the people and other boob-tube booboos

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

HOST: What do you want to say to all of the people who supported you in this contest?

Guest: Of course, thank you. Thank you *talaga* for all the support and believe you have shown!

(We've changed our minds-we withdraw our "believe"!)

***

Host: How did you feel when you were announced as the winner of the competition?

Guest: *Siyempre*, surprised! My mouth fell down!

(Pick it up, quick!)

***

Host: Is the Philippines really safe from the bird flu that's affected so many other Asian countries?

Guest: Yes, and we should be so grateful, *kasi suwerte tayo na karamihan ng manok dito, pinatubo dito sa Pilipinas!*

(*Pinatubong manok? Bago 'yon, a!*)

***

Host: You're an outstanding achiever at such a young age—how do you account for this?

Guest: Well, it must be because, even as a child, I was already exposed by my parents and teachers to all the different exposures!

(That's a lot of—exposure!)

***

Host: Why do you like staying in your hometown in the province, rather than in Metro Manila, where the action is supposed to be?

Guest: Because, in the province, I feel at home in the perimeter of the people there!

(*Ay*, perimeter of the people!)

***

Host: Tell us about your wedding next month—details, interesting tidbits—like the design of the wedding gown and the wedding entourage.

Guest: Well, as for the gowns we will be wearing, the motive is pink!

(One man's motif is another man's motive!)

***

Host: Do you favor holding a constitutional convention rather than a presidential election, as some people propose?

Guest: No, I'm not sold to the idea. I find it impossible, and even remote!

(*Di ba*, remote *muna bago* impossible?)

***

Host: What should children do when they have a problem—ask the help of their *barkada*?

Guest: No, not yet. First, *dapat magtanong sila sa kanilang mga magulang, kung mas matanda sa kanila.*

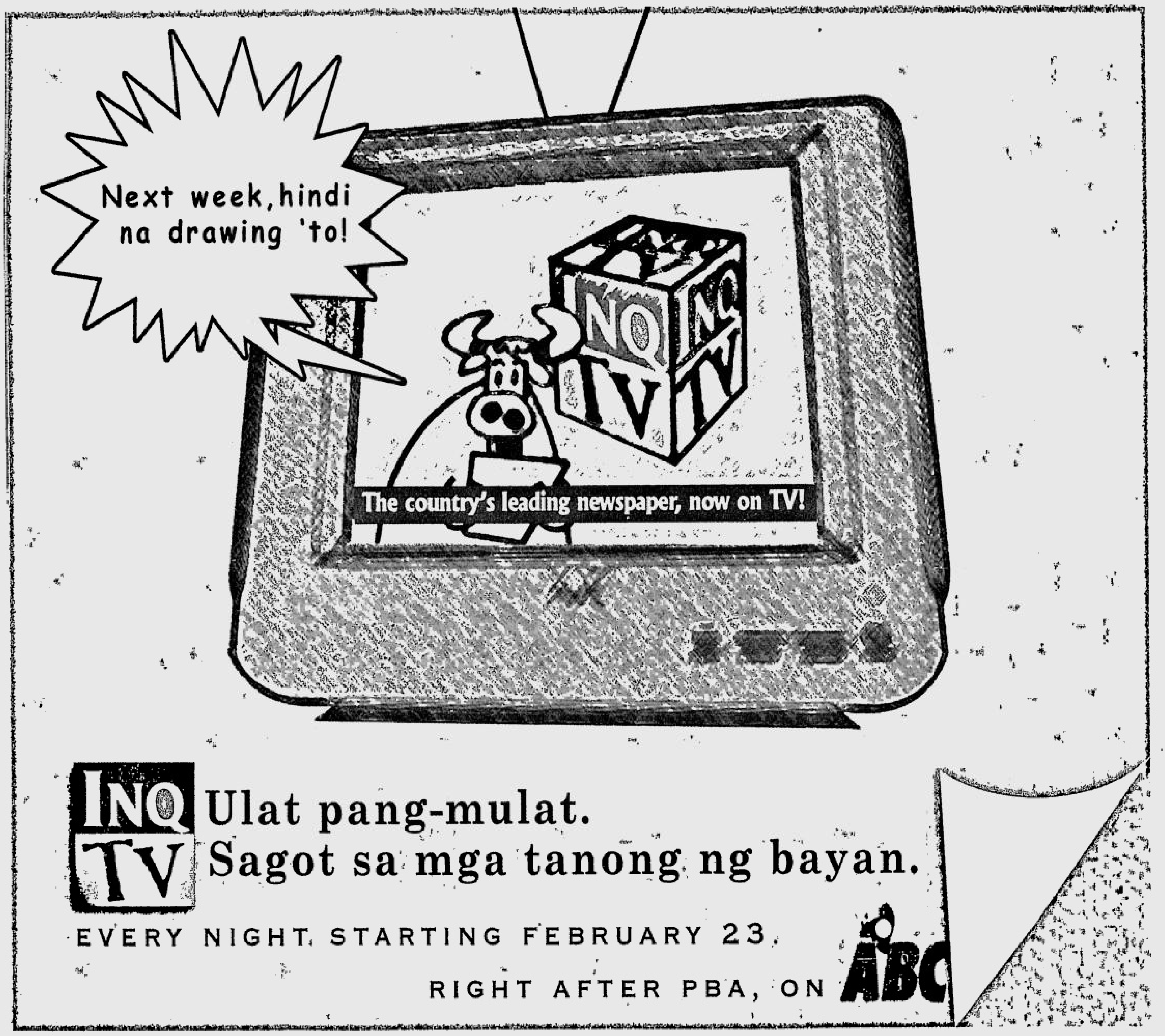
(*Siyempre, mas matanda ang mga magulang, no?*)

***

Host: You have known the senatorial candidate for a long time?

Guest: Yes, ever since high school.

PERIMETER/A21



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Treasury bill rates continue to rise

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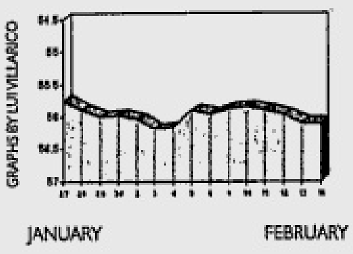

GRAPHS BY LUI VILLARICO

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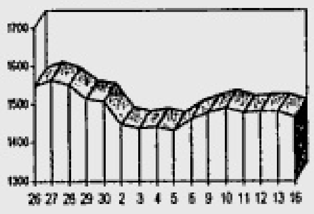
Stocks end down on profit-taking



(See stock market report on Page B4)

STOCKS closed lower yesterday on mild profit-taking in select blue chips, led by telecom stocks PLDT and Globe Telecom.

Analysts said the lack of positive news and lingering political worries ahead of the May 10 election meant there were few buying incentives for investors.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., the country's biggest phone firm, fell 2.13 percent or P20 to P920. It is due to announce its 2003 earnings results on Thursday. Second-ranked Globe Telecom Inc. dropped 1.13 percent or P10 to P875.

"The market was close to the key resistance level of 1,500. That's why there's a negative bias," said AB Capital economic analyst Jose Vistan.

The main index finished 1.07 percent or 15.78 points lower at 1,464.99 points. The market is up 1.57 percent so far this year.

Value turnover dipped to P534.61 million from Friday's P565.73 million. In the broader market, losers beat gainers 24 to 15 and there were 41 stocks unchanged.

Analysts said there were also concerns about civil unrest if popular movie actor Fernando Poe Jr. is disqualified from the presidential race on the ground that he is not a natural-born Filipino.

"People are waiting for political developments. FPJ has a strong following and his fans have said they will protest any ruling disqualifying him," Vistan said.

Traders said the market may ease further today within a range of 1,430 to 1,500 given the lack of inspiring leads.

Pilipino Telephone Corp. (Piltel), 45-percent owned by PLDT and the country's third-biggest mobile firm, bucked the market decline and rose 10.13 percent or 16 centavos to P1.74.

Reuters

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT'S cost of short-term borrowing rose by as much as 28.8 basis points in yesterday's treasury bill auction as banks were seen to avoid long-term investments due to perceived uncertainty on the political front.

Deputy Treasurer Mina Figueroa said in a briefing that political risks such as the one brought by the coming national elections, pushed banks to go for short-term investments.

"The market now prefers short-term investments, still because of uncertainty, and because the peso is still under pressure," Figueroa said.

She added that the recent increase in the liquidity reserve requirement on banks was also a factor for them to go for short-term investments.

The 91-day treasury bill rate, used by banks as a benchmark in pricing their loans, rose by 21.9 basis points to 6.435 percent from the last auction's 6.216 percent. The 182-day rate likewise increased by 28.8 basis points to 7.834 percent from 7.546 percent.

All bids for the one-year debt paper, meanwhile, were rejected by the Treasury because these were deemed too high. Figueroa said the government was firm in not accepting unreasonably high bids because these would impact on banks' interest rates.

"We cannot stimulate the private sector to borrow if the rates are too high. Therefore, as much as possible, we want the interest rates to stay low," Figueroa said.

Worth of tenders for the 91-day bills reached P5.26 billion, but the government accepted only P3 billion. Fort the 182-day paper, the government accepted only P2.205 billion out of P3.105 billion in tenders.

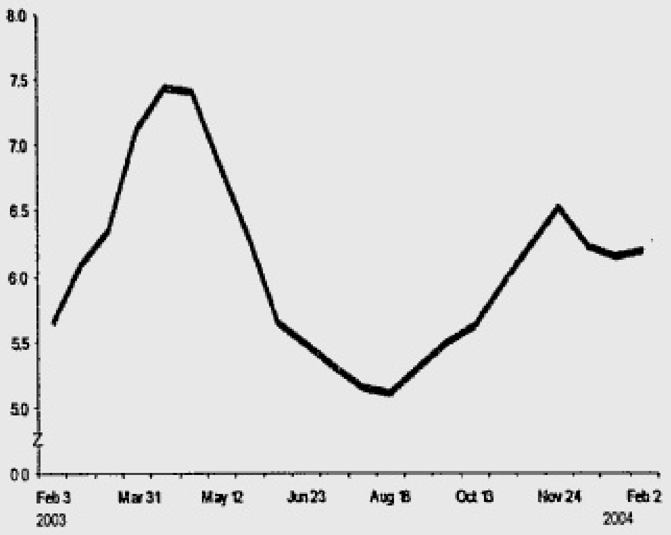
Figueroa said the higher interest of banks in short-term instruments might affect today's auction for treasury bonds. The high bids placed for the 364-day bills, she said, indicated that there was really no demand for the one-year instrument.

The lack of interest for the one-year debt paper was deemed by some to indicate that demand for the longer-term treasury bonds would also be lower.

Figueroa, however, said she expected the average rate for treasury bonds to increase by about 20 basis points in today's auction.

91-DAY TREASURY BILL RATES

(Feb. 3, 2003 to Feb. 2, 2004)



Group warns of higher gas, transport prices

By Abigail L. Ho

THE CONSUMER and Oil Price Watch (COPW) has warned of steeper increases in oil prices and transport fares once a proposal to shift to the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) as a benchmark for petroleum product prices was implemented.

In a news briefing yesterday, COPW chair Raul Concepcion said the volatility of the MOPS compared with the cost of Dubai crude could very well result in more frequent price movements as news like the closure of one refinery in the region could already result in a spike in prices.

He explained that the MOPS worked in a similar fashion to the stock market that reacts negatively or positively, on a day-to-day basis, to market-moving news.

MOPS is the pricing benchmark used by new oil players and Caltex Phil. Inc. as this is based on prices of finished products, unlike the Dubai crude that considers prices of unrefined petroleum products.

Without refineries here, Caltex and the new players import all their supply requirements.

Oil majors Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. and Petron Corp. use both the MOPS and the Dubai crude as benchmarks for pricing their petroleum products.

Both firms, while having their own refineries here, also import some of their supply requirements to be able to comply with the Clean Air Act's lower sulfur requirements for diesel and the cap on aromatics or additives for gasoline.

Shell general manager Roberto Kanapi said the shift in benchmarks did not necessarily mean steeper increases in oil prices and inevitably, transport fares, as a decline in MOPS prices could also be passed on to consumers in the form of lower pump prices.

"Volatility of pricing could work both ways because changes can either be up or down. This will also benefit consumers when the prices go down," he said in a telephone interview yesterday.

Shell was the one that proposed to have the benchmark changed from the current Dubai crude to MOPS so that, in

GROUP/ B4

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In the neck of time

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

JUST in the nick of time, as this term of this cute administration of Gloriaetta is about to end, national treasury boss Sergio Edeza gets a lucky break.

He is moving back to banking, this time as president of the Philippine Import-Export Bank which, like the treasury, is under the Department of Finance.

It is nevertheless a different entity from the Export Import Bank. This one is a private commercial bank controlled by a group headed by Donald Dee.

The bank of Dee and company also absorbed the bankrupt Urban Bank, and the Dee group therefore would try to repay all the poor depositors of Urban.

As for Edeza's new assignment, anyway, the bank is the former Philguarantee, which also suffered from financial troubles.

It did not close down despite the financial difficulties, simply because the government owned it. The government even converted it into a bank.

Sure—it was the best thing that could happen to the institution. It's not as if the banking system does not have those hundreds of billions of pesos in bad loans.

***

ANYWAY, before resigned Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho enticed Edeza to join the government, Edeza was an executive of Metropolitcan Bank and Trust Co.

Metrobank was and still is only the largest bank in the country. The ranking of Philippine Import Export Bank is somewhere between down there and purgatory.

Still, in a recent forum for foreign fund managers which was organized by the local branch of Deutsche Bank, Edeza beamed as the emcee announced his movement.

To take his place at the national treasury is his assistant, Mina Figueroa, who is also a professional banker.

Nobody can actually say who, between Edeza and Figueroa, is getting the better movement. For Figueroa it's a promotion. For Edeza it's just a…well, movement.

***

BUT in that Deutsche Bank forum, being the head of the national treasury, as expected, Edeza got it in the neck from foreign fund managers.

Of all the speakers, Edeza actually attracted the most difficult questions. They mostly touched on the monstrous national debt. It already reached about P3.3 trillion as of last count, and still counting.

Some of the questions also had something to do with the biggest reason behind the growth of the national debt tumor—the amazing budget deficit.

Taking over from Edeza at the treasury, this time, it is Figueroa who gets it in the neck, dealing with those same hard issues, say, when she faces those sharp fund managers from abroad, and she must answer their queries preferably with a straight face.

As for Edeza, we all know that the government can only afford starvation pay for line positions such as Cabinet secretaries or national treasurer.

The government does offer handsome salaries, not to mention some sexy benefits, to the executives of government-owned or controlled corporations.

Is his movement therefore a reward for loyal service, since unlike Camacho, he did not leave this cute administration and badmouthed it in business gatherings? Nobody knows.

* * *

REPORTS said that Global Infrastructure Holdings Ltd., or GIHL, the new owner of the bankrupt National Steel Corp., will try to look for iron ore deposits here.

Sure, it may be an indication of the seriousness of the India-based conglomerate in making a go for an integrated steel mill plant in our country, but there is more to it than just good intentions.

Only some 40 years ago, as a background, we started dreaming of someday having our very own fully integrated steel mill plant, the dream of every country wanting to industrialize.

The government-owned firm never got anywhere near the realization of the coveted integrated steel mill.

National Steel, even as Iligan Steel in the beginning 40 years ago, only managed to be passed around from one group of shady owners to another.

Finally, however, here comes a group, GIHL, which this early is even sounding off about raw material sourcing. Not so fast, Caiphas.

Gosh, we are not yet even certain that GIHL is going to make good on its big high-up-in-the-skies promises on National Steel. Let see the color of its money, okay!

***

BESIDES, as we all know, the Supreme Court just ruled that foreign companies cannot do mining activities in the country, because such is…well, "unconstitutional."

Up to today, a couple of weeks after the ruling came out, it still sends jitters down the spine of the business community, which we thought all along was actually spineless.

Under the ruling also falls the biggest foreign investment in the country so far—the Malampaya natural gas project.

Despite assurances from its operator, the Shell group, that the ruling does not apply to its project, some in the business community remain wary.

And so I am not sure how GIHL feels about that Supreme Court ruling. I only know that the ruling shows how unpredictable things are this country for business.

***

ALL RIGHT, quoting unnamed government officials, the reports on GIHL's mining plans claimed that the Indian group could go another route.

In a way, it just goes around the Supreme Court ruling against mining ventures which are fully owned by foreign companies.

Let me see if I got it—what GIHL can actually do is, well, it can simply employ some dummies in the mining venture to fool the Supreme Court—is that it?

Besides, how certain is a foreign group like GIHL, which today enjoys the favor of this cute administration, that it would get the same treatment under the next?

Finally, nobody can really be sure that Supreme Court will not rule against that "other route." With our Supreme Court, you really can never tell.

Jan. BOP registers deficit of $595M

THE PHILIPPINES incurred a balance of payment (BOP) deficit of $595 million in January, a reversal of the surpluses registered in the same period over the past two years. The huge deficit was due to debt servicing, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said.

The country posted a $141-million BOP surplus in January 2003 and $806 million in 2002.

It was also the second month in a row that the country incurred a BOP shortfall.

BOP measures the foreign exchange transactions between the domestic economy and the rest of the world. It is affected by inflows and outflows made through trade transactions and investments.

A BSP official said maturing obligations had to be serviced by both the public and private sector in January which explained the high BOP gap.

"If you will look at portfolio inflows, as of Feb. 17, there were still bigger inflows and outflows," the official said.

The BSP is banking on increased export earnings to generate $660 million in BOP surplus this year, higher than the $108 million in surplus last year.

The National Statistics Office has yet to release the country's export earnings report for January but based on recent trends, there could be a significant rebound since December of last year.

The BSP hopes to register $14 billion to $15 billion in gross international reserves. *Doris C. Dumlao*

RISING DEMAND

Bank lending up 3.8% in Dec.

By Doris C. Dumlao

LENDING by Philippine commercial banks expanded by 3.8 percent to P1.49 trillion in December 2003 from a year ago, reflecting the surge in demand for fresh funds during the Christmas season.

This marked the third straight month that the banking sector showed lending expansion, although the annual increase was slightly lower than the 4.3-percent growth recorded in November.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura also said the growth in bank lending was accompanied by a 4.3-percent rise in domestic liquidity.

He said the growth in lending during the month was fueled by the 20.2-percent increase in loans to the community, social and personal services sector.

Continued expansion was also seen in the following sectors during the period: agriculture, fisheries and forestry (8.9 percent); transportation, storage and communication (8.1 percent); financial institutions, real estate and business services sector (4.2 percent); wholesale and retail trade (2.1 percent); and; construction (1.8 percent).

These sectors accounted for about 70 percent of the total amount of outstanding commercial bank loans as of end-December.

He noted that the improvement in real sector activity arising from the growth in lending and domestic liquidity was evident in the 4.5-percent growth in gross domestic product in 2003, which was higher than the levels in the last two years.

GDP refers to the total amount of goods and services produced by the economy in a given period.

The BSP chief also noted that:

- the volume of passenger cars sold in 2003 marked an 11.9 percent annual increase, a reversal of the 8.3 percent decline in the previous year;
- there was significant improvement in the economy's energy consumption, as reflected in the 4.4 percent annual growth in Meralco's energy sales as of end-December from only 0.6 percent growth in the previous year.

"Going forward, monetary policy will continue to provide an appropriate level of liquidity to finance the economy's requirements for sustained growth and respond in a timely manner to emergent risks to future inflation," he said.

The BSP recently increased the liquid reserve requirement on banks by 2 percentage points, a measure that will siphon off about P30 billion in money supply. The monetary tightening was adopted following the sharp peso depreciation and the uptick in inflation rate for January.

Credit card: Friend or foe?

FEATURE

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

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FOR many Filipinos, a credit card is something like a badge of honor.

Getting a credit card means they have joined the ranks of millions of Filipinos who get their favorite items by just having their card swiped and by signing on a piece of a paper.

Roman Salvador is one of these people. Unfortunately, he did not have the sense of responsibility that should go along with the credit card. Thus, like a kid let loose in a toy store, he used his credit card like there was no tomorrow.

Before he knew it, he had accumulated over P100,000 in credit card debt. He could barely service this debt. All he could manage to do was pay the minimum payment required to ward off the credit collectors and watch his total debt get bigger.

Roman's case is more the rule than the exception especially among Filipinos who have the mistaken notion that a credit card is a source of additional money. But it is not only Filipinos who are affected by this malaise.

Proper use

The United States has reported one of the biggest credit card debts on record and South Korea is already reeling from a credit card crisis.

In South Korea, one out of five working adults are now classified as credit-card debt defaulters because economic prosperity has caused many South Koreans to buy almost everything in sight without being able to pay for the purchases on time.

As a result, LG Card Co., South Korea's largest card issuer, almost collapsed if not for the $1.7-billion bailout extended by a group of creditor banks. LG Card said it would have to write off a staggering $7.6 billion in bad debt.

Having a credit card, however, has its definite advantages.

First is security because you don't have to carry a lot of cash around especially when traveling. It also provides an emergency source of cash.

All it takes, the local banks say, is to know how to use a credit card and take advantage of its benefits without falling into the debt trap.

Citibank, the country's biggest credit card issuer, recommends that consumers look at value for money when choosing a credit card.

Value comes in the form of discounts that make paying in credit better than paying in cash.

Citibank assistant vice president Liel Gonzalez added that a credit card today could also be used for any and all types of expenses, not just for shopping. It could be used to pay for a dream wedding, a grand vacation and even setting up a business.

Gonzalez also said that a consumer should check which card suits his or her lifestyle because some cards cater to different markets as part of the growing competition. Some of the rewards packages are suited for travelers, while others are for women or young professionals.

Lifestyle

"In choosing a credit card, you should also consider your lifestyle. Are you a frequent traveler? New on the job or pretty senior in your company? Look for a card that reflects who you are," Gonzalez said.

For example, Citibank offers co-branded credit cards that give rewards to their targeted market. Always traveling? Then get a Citibank Gold card that gives you and a companion free access to Northwest airport lounges around the world or a Citibank Cathay Pacific Visa where all your spending earns free air miles—faster. For motorists, Shell-Citibank MasterCard will entitle you to fuel rebates for all expenses.

A most recent addition to the Citibank portfolio is the Clear card designed to appeal to the young market. Cardholders get 10 percent to 15 percent discount in "gimmick" places and retail outlets as well as a Starbucks upsize offer.

But before you start splurging, Gonzalez gives a word of caution: "A credit card opens up a whole array of goods and services to the cardholder but it should be treated with respect and responsibility. The cardinal rule is "Know yourself." This means you must balance your capacity to spend versus your income and basic expenses.

Practical alternative

HSBC, one of the country's leading credit card issuers, stressed that one of the first things that credit card users should know is that credit cards are designed to temporarily take the place of cash, thus, should not be seen as an extra source of cash or income.

And if used properly, it is even better to use credit cards instead of cash because these provide add-ons such as bonus points that could be exchanged for items such as air miles, appliances and gift items depending on the credit card company.

Credit card issuers likewise usually tie-up with companies or establishments to provide interest-free installment payments on big-ticket items such as travel packages and expensive appliances.

Using a credit card also stretches the finances because you could pay for your purchases as long as 30 days after you made the purchase, depending on the statement and posting date of the credit card company.

The key is to pay for the purchases in full on the due date so that you won't have to pay for interest.

Tax probe of BCDA ecozones shelved

BAGUIO CITY—Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno on Saturday said no tax investigations or audits would be conducted on economic zone firms administered by the Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA), which were affected by a Supreme Court ruling that voided their tax privileges.

Parayno said he had decided to await the Supreme Court's final resolution on an October 2003 ruling that nullified Proclamation 420, which former President Fidel Ramos issued to establish the Camp John Hay special economic zone in 1994.

The Supreme Court ruled that only Congress had the authority to grant tax privileges to such zones, and voided the benefits already being applied to the Camp John Hay Development Corp. (CJHDevco), the John Hay developer.

CJHDevco, as well as investors of Poro Point and the Clark Special Economic Zone, voiced their apprehensions about the tribunal's ruling issued in October last year.

Rufo Colayco, BCDA president in a January interview, said the court did not dispute Malacañang's mandate to create BCDA-administered economic zones like the Subic Bay Free Port.

"The ruling does not prevent us from issuing a new order that follows the court's prescriptions," he added.

Parayno's statement addressed an accusation hurled against BCDA last week by the developer of Camp John Hay.

Fil Estate Chair Robert John Sobrepeña, who is also the CJHDevco president, said the developer had virtually lost its import and tax benefits in January despite the government's promises of a remedy to the controversial Supreme Court ruling.

He complained in a Feb. 2 letter to Colayco that both the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Baguio City treasury have started assessing the firm's tax liabilities, apparently in compliance with the tribunal's decision. *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

BIR readies new tax collection measures

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU of Internal Revenue said it was set to introduce new measures to improve its tax collection this year, and to repeat last year's feat of surpassing its target.

Last year was the first time in years that the BIR exceeded its collection target.

In yesterday's launch of the BIR's tax campaign for 2004, Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno Jr. said the agency would tie up with civic organizations and business groups to promote the payment of proper taxes among citizens.

He added that the BIR was also planning to give incentives to corporate taxpayers, whose income tax remittances in April 2004 were expected to exceed last year's level by 20 percent. Parayno said one incentive could be in the form of exemption from auditing by the BIR.

Parayno added that tax measures introduced in 2003 would be intensified this year. These included the tax mapping drive, the electronic filing and payment system, imposition of VAT on professionals and online TIN issuance.

Under the tax mapping drive, BIR personnel last year visited about 200,000 business establishments nationwide to look into their tax compliance.

Parayno said the BIR was targeting to cover more business establishments under the tax mapping drive and to encourage more taxpayers to avail themselves of the online services of the BIR.

DTI calls on drug manufacturers to bring down medicine prices

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry yesterday appealed to drug makers' sense of social responsibility and asked for a lowering of medicine prices.

"It would be a big relief for consumers if they could obtain their medicine at a discount," Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar Purisima said.

Purisima asked drug companies to sell their products at more affordable prices as the majority of the population earn hardly enough to make both ends meet.

"We are not asking drug companies to sell at a loss," he said.

"What we are asking for is a meaningful price reduction as a result of the companies' belief in social responsibility," he added.

The official said pharmaceutical firms could take their cue from pharmaceutical firm GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), which slashed prices of its essential medicine by 34 percent through its value health program.

As many as 15 drugs for common ailments like asthma, infection, tuberculosis gout and arthritis were covered by GSK's program.

"We appeal to drug companies to make their medicine more accessible to consumers," Purisima said.

"I believe that genuine healthcare service also means making medicine within the reach of the poor," he said.

Purisima added that while drug prices were still high, consumers could buy branded but cheaper essential medicine from government hospitals under the DTI's Presyong Tama, Gamot Pampamilya program.

The agency spearheaded the sale of medicine at as much as 87 percent cheaper than those sold in drugstores.

For instance, the 20-milligram Adelat Retard tablet—a popular anti-hypertensive drug which sells at P29.75 each in drugstores—could be bought at P5.75 in Presyong Tama outlets.

Purisima's predecessor Manuel Roxas II led a study on the big difference between prices of medicine sold in the local market and in other Asian countries.

After considering both Philippine and international patent laws, including relevant rules of the World Trade Organization, the DTI came up with the program to lower costs of essential medicine.

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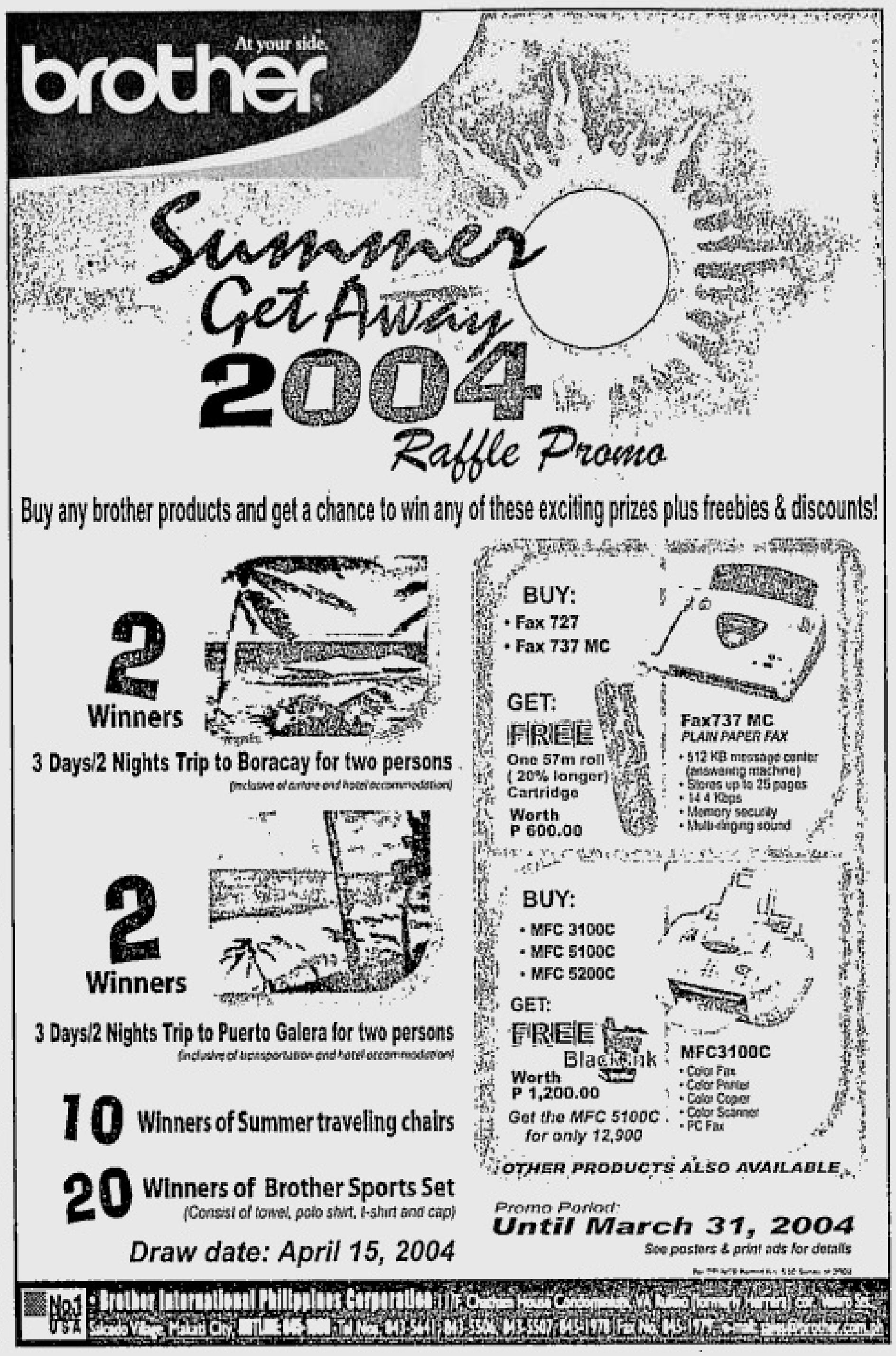
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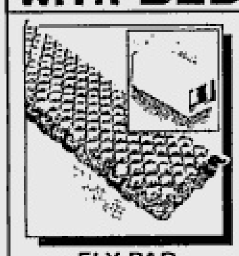
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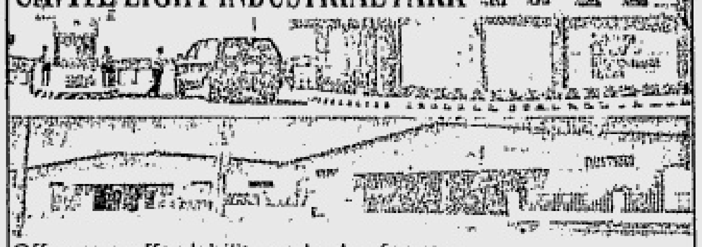
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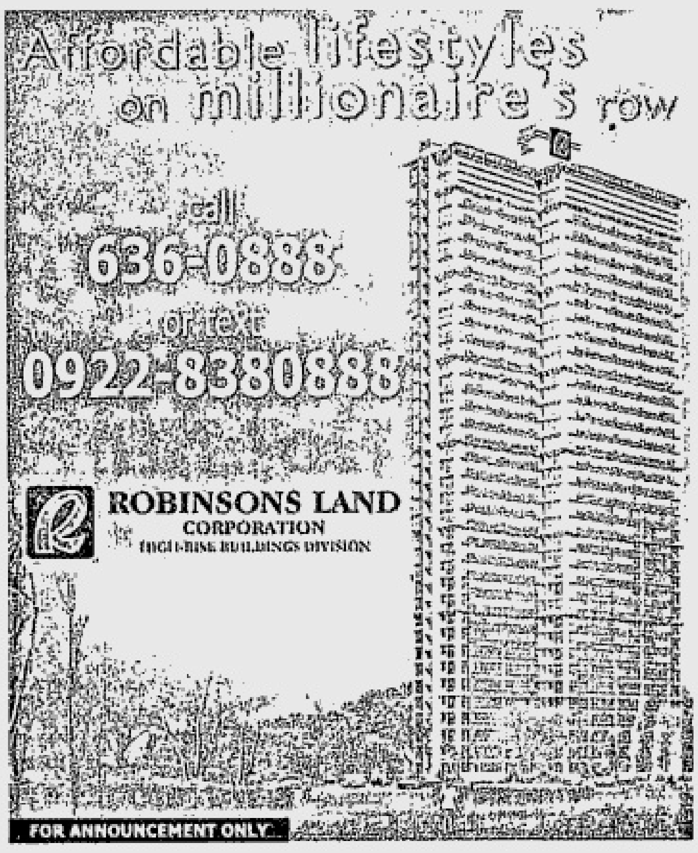
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Messages

Warmest felicitations to the honorees and guests of Generali Pilipinas on the occasion of its 3rd Annual Awards and Recognition Night.

It is with pleasure that I join Generali Pilipinas in paying tribute to its outstanding performers for the year 2003. Indeed, it is an accomplishment to be able to demonstrate strong commitment to support the vison and goals of your company through concrete results.

Tonight, we recognize your business acumen and will to help our countrymen secure their interests. I urge you to carry on with your business, knowing that the insurance industry, as a risk distributing mechanism, significantly contributes to the stability of our economy.

May you be inspired to deliver quality products and services so that your network will expand and help even more of our people.

Congratulations and Mabuhay!

Gloria Arroyo
HON. GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO
President
Republic of the Philippines

The life and non-life insurance industry will not be where it is today if not for remarkable individuals like you. As Generali Pilipinas offers tonight's ceremonies to your amazing feats in 2003, allow me to share in the celebration of your success by revealing to our fellowmen how worthy all of you are to have this recognition.

You are a tough warrior. Although you may have been a recipient of various objections and rejections at one time or another, you have clearly surpassed these challenges and made it to tonight's circle of winners. Having this undaunted spirit is what separates you from ordinary individuals.

You are also noble. The business of insurance is not about earning a living but about offering an auspicious future: the one that provides peace of mind, security, and financial stability. You have lived your life in service to your clients and that alone substantiates the level of dignity you have achieved and so greatly deserve.

But most of all, you are a hero; the modern-day kind that understands the value of protection. For I know that no matter how many awards you receive, at the end of the day, it is the number of people and assets you have secured that will warm your hearts the most.

To the eleven Annual Awardees of Generali Pilipinas, my sincerest congratulations!

EDUARDO MALINIS
Insurance Commissioner

It brings me pride to see your dedication in the pursuit of excellence. You have brought honor to Generali Pilipinas and I want to thank you for your continued support in achieving our company goals. Difficult tasks lie ahead but certainly, all things precious require the very best from us.

It also delights me to witness the glory you have achieved. Behind every successful individual is an inspiration and behind every winner tonight is a proud and happy family. I thank each of your families for bringing out the best in you. They deserve the glory as much as you do.

After breaking countless barriers in 2003, it is time for you to be heard by the entire industry as you Roar and Soar in 2004. Just like how our Winged Lion exists to guide our company to the right course, let it likewise call upon that feisty character inside of you to come out and create a thunderous sound. On behalf of the Management and Staff of Generali Pilipinas Life Assurance Company and Generali Pilipinas Insurance Company, thank you for your commitment to our vision of being the best provider of insurance-based solutions to the risk management needs of every individual, family and enterprise in the country.

Congratulations to our distinguished awardees and let us all Roar and Soar in 2004!

ALFONSO P. GARCIA, JR.
President & CEO
Generali Pilipinas

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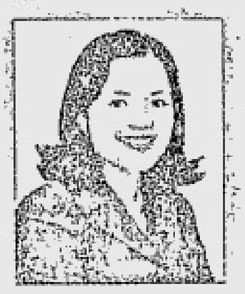
- Composite UM of the Year
- Non-Life UM of the Year

MICHELLE J. MEER
- Non-Life FC of the Year
- Council of the Winged Lion President's Circle (Non-Life)
- Century Club - Club 100

ALEXANDER B. GUTIERREZ
- Council of the Winged Lion President's Circle (Non-Life)
- Century Club - Club 100

ANGELI P. SIAN
- Council of the Winged Lion Executive's Circle (Non-Life)
- Century Club - Club 100



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DELIA G. BACON
- Century Club - Club 75

EDUARDO C. EDRALIN
- Century Club - Club 50
- Highest Policy Count in a Single Month (Life)

VAL F. FRANCISCO
- Century Club - Club 50
- Highest Policy Count in a Single Month (Non-Life)

ELVIRA P. VILLARAN
- Century Club - Club 50

MIA ANN H. BABIJIS
- Century Club - Club 50

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DTI calls on drug manufacturers to bring down medicine prices

By Ronnel W. Domingo

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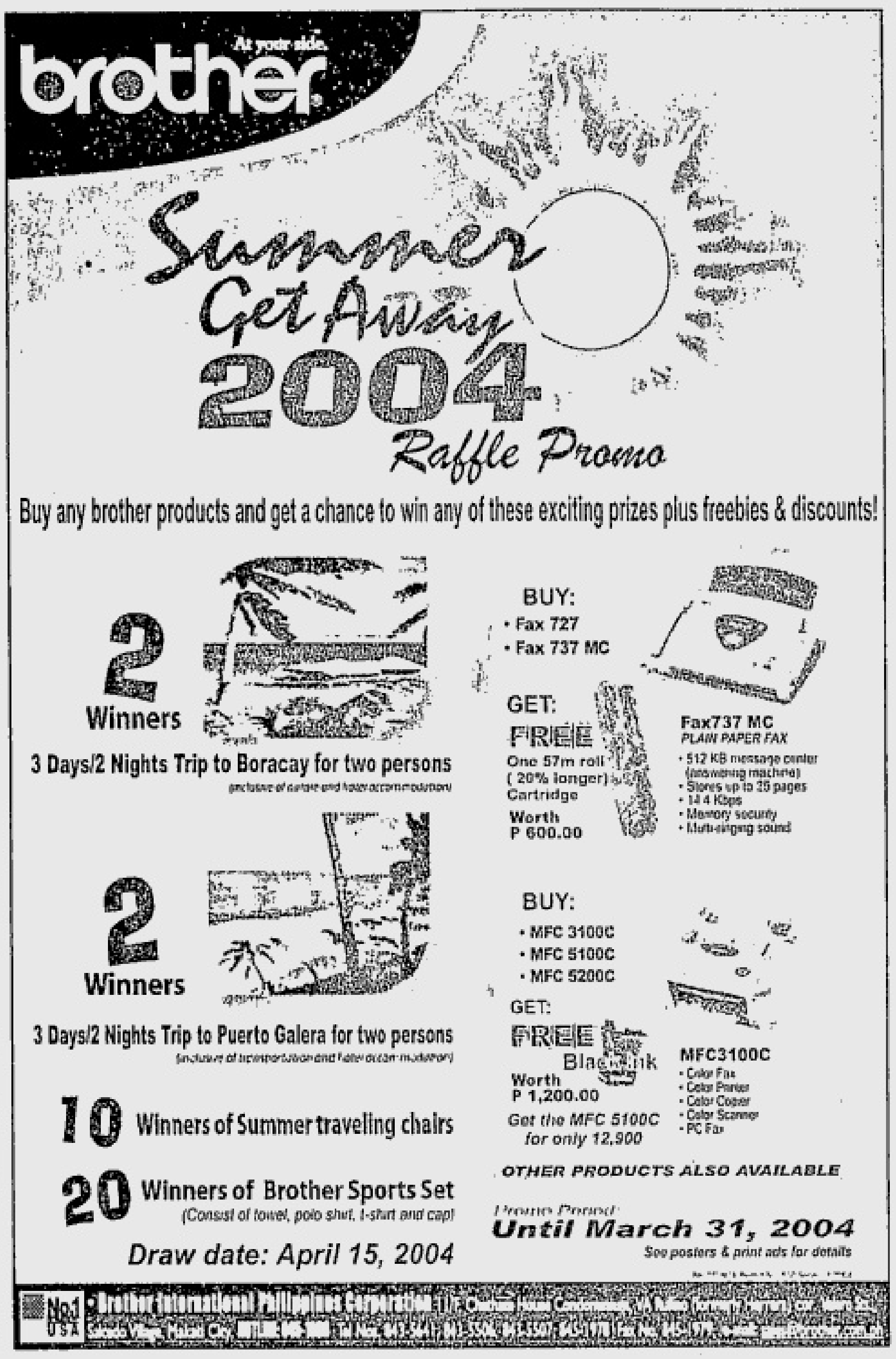
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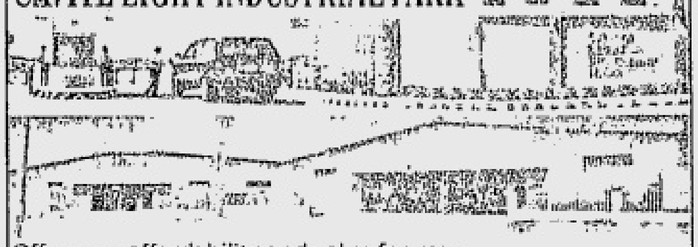
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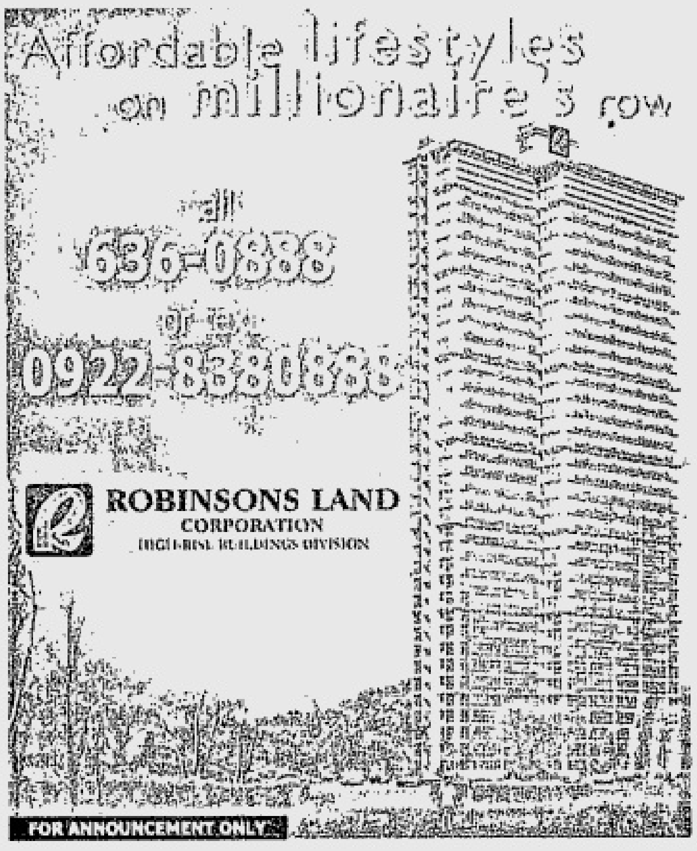
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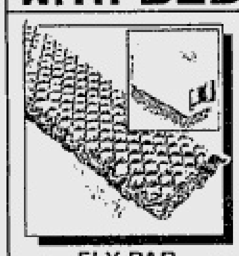
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Messages

Warmest felicitations to the honorees and guests of Generali Pilipinas on the occasion of its 3rd Annual Awards and Recognition Night.

It is with pleasure that I join Generali Pilipinas in paying tribute to its outstanding performers for the year 2003. Indeed, it is an accomplishment to be able to demonstrate strong commitment to support the vision and goals of your company through concrete results.

Tonight, we recognize your business acumen and will to help our countrymen secure their interests. I urge you to carry on with your business, knowing that the insurance industry, as a risk distributing mechanism, significantly contributes to the stability of our economy.

May you be inspired to deliver quality products and services so that your network will expand and help even more of our people.

Congratulations and Mabuhay!

Gloria Arroyo
HON. GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO
President
Republic of the Philippines

The life and non-life insurance industry will not be where it is today if not for remarkable individuals like you. As Generali Pilipinas offers tonight's ceremonies to your amazing feats in 2003, allow me to share in the celebration of your success by revealing to our fellowmen how worthy all of you are to have this recognition.

You are a tough warrior. Although you may have been a recipient of various objections and rejections at one time or another, you have clearly surpassed these challenges and made it to tonight's circle of winners. Having this undaunted spirit is what separates you from ordinary individuals.

You are also noble. The business of insurance is not about earning a living but about offering an auspicious future; the one that provides peace of mind, security, and financial stability. You have lived your life in service to your clients and that alone substantiates the level of dignity you have achieved and so greatly deserve.

But most of all, you are a hero: the modern-day kind that understands the value of protection. For I know that no matter how many awards you receive, at the end of the day, it is the number of people and assets you have secured that will warm your hearts the most.

To the eleven Annual Awardees of Generali Pilipinas, my sincerest congratulations!

EDUARDO MALINIS
Insurance Commissioner

It brings me pride to see your dedication in the pursuit of excellence. You have brought honor to Generali Pilipinas and I want to thank you for your continued support in achieving our company goals. Difficult tasks lie ahead but certainly, all things precious require the very best from us.

It also delights me to witness the glory you have achieved. Behind every successful individual is an inspiration and behind every winner tonight is a proud and happy family. I thank each of your families for bringing out the best in you. They deserve the glory as much as you do.

After breaking countless barriers in 2003, it is time for you to be heard by the entire industry as you Roar and Soar in 2004. Just like how our Winged Lion exists to guide our company to the right course, let it likewise call upon that feisty character inside of you to come out and create a thunderous sound. On behalf of the Management and Staff of Generali Pilipinas Life Assurance Company and Generali Pilipinas Insurance Company, thank you for your commitment to our vision of being the best provider of insurance-based solutions to the risk management needs of every individual, family and enterprise in the country.

*Congratulations to our distinguished awardees and let us all **Roar and Soar** in 2004!*

ALFONSO P. GARCIA, JR.
President & CEO
Generali Pilipinas

GENERALI PILIPINAS

Generali Pilipinas' Finest and B[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

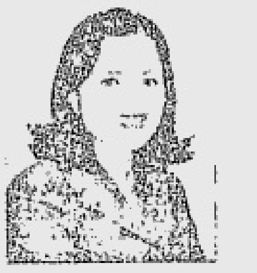
NIMFA P. MADARA
- Composite FC of the Year
- Council of the Winged Lion - Chairman's Circle (Non-Life)
- Century Club - Club 50
- Highest Premium in a Single Month (Life)
- Highest Premium in a Single Month (Non-Life)

ZENAIDA G. LORENZO
- Composite UM of the Year
- Non-Life UM of the Year

MICHELLE J. MEER
- Non-Life FC of the Year
- Council of the Winged Lion President's Circle (Non-Life)
- Century Club - Club 100

ALEXANDER B. GUTIERREZ
- Council of the Winged Lion President's Circle (Non-Life)
- Century Club - Club 100

ANGELI P. SIAN
- Council of the Winged Lion Executive's Circle (Non-Life)
- Century Club - Club 100



BEVY ALVA C. CARAL
- NewComer Life FC of the Year

DELIA G. BACON
- Century Club - Club 75

EDUARDO C. EDRALIN
- Century Club - Club 50
- Highest Policy Count in a Single Month (Life)

VAL F. FRANCISCO
- Century Club - Club 50
- Highest Policy Count in a Single Month (Non-Life)

ELVIRA P. VILLARAN
- Century Club - Club 50

MIA ANN H. BABIJIS
- Century Club - Club 50

The day the market died

MR. BEARBULL

Ron Nathan

READERS probably know that Valentine Day is also my wedding anniversary. This was not the result of any romantic notion on my behalf, I was simply being practical. I only have to take my wife out once a year instead of twice, and all the expensive restaurants are booked up weeks in advance so we invariably ended up in a fast food. This year, even the fast foods were full so we ordered a pizza. This is a good example of lateral thinking. I was lying down at that time.

While we were in Glorietta, we stumbled into a sale where everything was 50-percent off. Now if there is one thing my wife likes, it is bargains, so she proceeded to buy up everything in the store. It is a good job that I have an Iridium credit card, good for $1 million. While she was indulging her buying spree, I rang up Caterpillar and they lent me a 12-wheel truck used for transporting oil rigs. We are now looking for a 25-room condominium.

There are so many crazy people around and I always find them. I was standing in an appliance shop when a man comes in and asks, "Do you sell color TVs?" "Of course," said the salesgirl. "In that case, I will have a green one."

When we were in Ocean Park, Hong Kong, apart from the pandas, dolphins and killer whales, there was a family of polar bears. The baby asked his mother, "Am I really a polar bear?" "Of course you are. You have thick white fur." He remained unconvinced and asked his father, "Am I really a polar bear?" "What a silly question," replied his dad. "Of course you are, but why do you ask?" "Because I'm bloody well freezing," he said.

A man went to a rabbi and said, "My son has become a Christian. What can I do?" "I don't honestly know," replied the rabbi, "but I will ask God." The man returned the next day. "I have some bad news," said the Rabbi. "God is having the same problem."

There are a number of mechanical devices, which cause sexual arousal in women. The most effective is a Mercedes Benz. Personally, I think that sex is one of the most beautiful, natural, wholesome things that money can buy.

* * *

MANY years ago, Simon and Garfunkel wrote a wonderful song called "The Day the Market Died." Two weeks ago, we were trading P1.5 billion a day. Last Wednesday, we traded P230 million, and if you exclude the cross sales, the net turnover was P175 million, the lowest figure in a long time.

Filipinos have decided to stay out of the market after the peso fell to a new low of 56.22 to $1, which prompted the central bank to raise the reserve requirements of the banks by 2 percentage points, removing P30 billion of liquidity from the system. They are also waiting for the Supreme Court's decision on whether FPJ is qualified to run. Rumors abound that they will vote 8-5 to exclude him and I, for one, believe it. The sooner a verdict is announced, the better. The worst thing for the stock market is uncertainty as can be seen by yesterday's fall of 16 points.

Foreigners are also staying out and have become small net sellers. They are disappointed though not surprised by the downgrade made by Moody's, especially as there may be another, if the political situation worsens. Already, the killings have started. They are also awaiting the decision of CalPERS, which has given us a failing grade for the second time. If they decide that the Philippines is not a fit country to invest in, they will sell their $25 million worth of stocks. This, in itself, is not serious but CalPERS is the leading pension fund, and other pension funds and trusts will follow. As foreigners dominate our tiny market, the effect could be seriously adverse.

I think that the stock market is going to remain quiet until after the election and frankly, I don't know what I will write about if it trades P200 million a day. Perhaps I can review books or movies, or write about alternative medicine, about which I know quite a lot.

Interest rates have started rising and quite a lot of the treasury bill bids were not accepted as unreasonable. At yesterday's auction, the treasury sold all its 91-day bills at 6.43 percent, an increase of 22 basis points. It sold about half of its 182-day bills at 7.83 percent, a jump of 29 basis points. All bids for the 364-day bills were rejected, as the banks were demanding too great an increase. Interest rates will rise further but the government is trying to moderate the pace at which they will increase. Frankly, I feel the peso will come under pressure again and the central bank may be forced to raise the reserve requirement anew as well as letting interest rates rise further. All this is against the background of a very weak dollar.

I listened to Alan Greenspan's speech to Congress, even though it meant staying up until after 2 a.m. He gave an upbeat assessment of the US economy, and reiterated that the Federal Reserve would be patient regarding interest rates, currently at a 40-year low of 1 percent. One thing is certain and that is he will not raise rates a few months ahead of the election. Either he will do it by June or he will wait until next year. He is always careful not be seen as acting in a manner which might be interpreted as politically motivated.

He explained that the economy was growing at a satisfactory rate of 4.5 percent to 5 percent with inflation still benign. The $489-billion deficit is worrying, but should eventually taper off as the dollar continues to decline. He warned against protectionism and said that China was not the problem. If moves were made against China, other countries like Vietnam and South Korea would fill the vacuum. Apparently, China is outsourcing to these countries because their production costs are lower. Our minimum wage of $5 a day is high compared with these countries.

As to the disappointing number of jobs being created, he said it would pick up as the economy continues to grow. What has happened is that US companies have become so efficient by maximizing technology that they can increase profits substantially without hiring more people. So last year, the 500 companies in the S&P index increased profits by 25 percent year on year without increasing their labor force. The service industry will hire extra people and so will farming, but manufacturing is unlikely to make any contribution and has declined for 42 successive months.

The maestro is always worth listening to and the US is lucky to have such an intellectual giant. *mrbearbull@hotmail.com*

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of February 16, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	17	17	17	17	14,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	44.5	45	44	44	822,800
China Banking Corp.	660	660	660	660	580
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	39.5	39.5	38.5	38.5	99,800
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.56	0.56	0.53	0.55	270,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	26	27	26	26.5	375,000
Philippine National Bank	23.75	23.75	23.75	23.75	6,400
Phil. Savings Bank	26.5	26.5	26.5	26.5	17,400
Union Bank of the Phil.	26.5	26.5	26	26	1,300
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.32	1.32	1.32	1.32	50,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1510	1510	1510	1510	110
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.71	0.71	0.7	0.7	1,790,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	885	885	870	875	99,700
ISM Communications Corp.	0.039	0.039	0.039	0.039	700,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	1.62	1.76	1.62	1.74	66,956,000
Transpacific Broadcast	1.38	1.38	1.38	1.38	120,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	940	940	915	920	137,930
Ivantage Corp.	0.39	0.39	0.38	0.38	120,000
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.01	0.011	13,900,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	19.75	19.75	19	19.25	21,900
Manila Electric Co. B	32.5	32.5	31	31	611,900
Petron Corp.	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.45	1,913,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	426,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	40,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	51,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	30	30	30	30	6,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	20	20	19.75	19.75	118,100
RFM Corp.	0.63	0.68	0.63	0.68	20,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	100,000
San Miguel Corp. A	55.5	55.5	54.5	55	332,400
San Miguel Corp. B	69	69	68.5	69	135,500
Universal Robina Corp.	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.7	120,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	500,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	10,000
Ayala Corp.	5.9	5.9	5.8	5.8	2,104,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	4,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.023	0.023	0.022	0.022	4,000,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	18,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.58	2	1.58	1.6	182,000
ATN Holdings Inc. B	1.58	1.6	1.58	1.6	110,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	10,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.65	0.65	0.59	0.59	11,070,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.19	0.195	0.19	0.195	500,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.033	0.033	0.032	0.032	1,400,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1	1	1	1	10,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	24	24.25	23.5	23.75	460,900
Ionics Inc.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	5,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	3,000,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.08	1.08	1.06	1.08	2,795,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	70,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.29	0.3	0.29	0.29	9,060,000
Philcomsat Holdings Corp.	1.18	1.18	1.18	1.18	64,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	20,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Philippine Seven Corp.	3	3	3	3	525,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.46	0.49	0.46	0.49	310,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	40,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	100,000
Mondragon Intl Phils Inc.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	50,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	23	23.25	23	23	21,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	200
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.8	528,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	210,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.215	3,000,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.08	1.1	1.08	1.08	3,264,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.175	200,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	2.04	2.04	2.04	2.04	25,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6	6	5.9	5.9	7,069,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0028	0.0028	0.0028	0.0028	2,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	1	1	1	1	20,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.22	0.225	0.22	0.22	2,450,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	200,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	1,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.007	0.007	0.0065	0.007	12,000,000
Omico Corp.	0.0028	0.0028	0.0028	0.0028	2,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	1,430,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.46	0.46	0.46	0.46	20,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	7,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	6,000,000

ARROYO, COYIUTO, YUCHENGCO

3-way fight for PSE helm seen

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

VETERAN stockbroker Vivian Yuchengo yesterday confirmed she would run again as director of the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) to bridge the gap between some shareholders and incumbent chair Alicia Arroyo.

Arroyo is also completing her own slate for the PSE elections next month, indicating that three groups will be vying for the PSE board.

Yuchengo last sat as chair of the PSE in 2002 and was the first lady president of the old Makati Stock Exchange.

Those nominated under Yuchengco's camp include incumbent directors Myron Papa, Joseph Madrid, William Ang and Marita Limlingan. Stockbrokers Frank Villaroman of Securities Specialists Inc., Erlinda Mañalac of First Integrated Capital Securities, Robina Go of UBS Securities, Paul Wee of Capital Equities, Nestor Aguila of DA Market Securities are also expected to join the Yuchengco camp.

Although Arroyo was nominated by one of the nominees in the Yuchengco group, Arroyo said she was still finalizing her slate.

Yuchengco told the INQUIRER that some PSE shareholders were upset over the price gap at which the shares of PSE would be issued to potential investors and the bourse's market price at the time the offering was announced.

The PSE earlier disclosed that it had accepted the subscription of five institutional investors for 5.26 million new shares out of its capital stock. These investors were paying for the shares at P119.50 each.

The new investors—the state-run Government Service Insurance System, the PLDT Beneficial Trust Fund, the San Miguel Corp. Retirement Fund, Kim Eng Investment Ltd. and KE Strategic Pte. Ltd.—paid a total of P629 million for their investment in this private placement that was underwritten by ATR-Kim Eng Capital Partners Inc.

The PSE said the proceeds of the share offering would be used to build the exchange's infrastructure and strengthen working capital.

Sources said the price of PSE shares ranged between P195 and P200 at the time the private placement was announced in late last January.

"I wonder if the board has properly thought this matter out. I want to know the basis for this belated decision to tender for PSE shares and sell these in a private placement. I also want to know what was the resolution passed, which directors were present when the vote was taken, and how each director voted on this decision," Villaroman wrote in a letter addressed to the board last Feb. 2.

The PSE defended its move by saying that a substantial portion of PSE shares would be going to independent hands, a move to break the so-called boys club perception in the stock exchange.

According to a Securities and Exchange Commission directive, brokers of the PSE should comply with the ownership cap for exchanges under the Securities Regulation Code (SRC).

Under the SRC, institutional investors like brokers and financial institutions can own up to only 20 percent of the local bourse, while individual investors can own up to only 5 percent.

Taking this mandate into consideration, the local bourse has to sell 80 percent of its total outstanding shares to non-brokers, like the financial institutions that subscribed to 5.2 million new shares.

Group warns . . .

From page B1

Kanapi's words, price computations would be "simplified."

He said it was just a suggestion on Shell's part that the industry could choose to adopt.

But Concepcion said the suggestion for the shift was ill-timed as there were projections that prices of Dubai crude were on their way down.

There are projections that Dubai crude prices could go down to $24 a barrel in the second and third quarter and to $26 a barrel in the fourth quarter. To date, Dubai crude is averaging around $27 a barrel.

BIR stands firm on decision to seek back taxes fromSMC

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU of Internal Revenue said it was not reversing its decision to require San Miguel Corp. to pay P880 million in back taxes despite a protest from the food and beverage giant.

"They (SMC) are keeping their stand, and we are sticking to our decision. Whatever the outcome of this conflict, therefore, will depend on which of the two positions is more convincing," she said.

Estelita Aguirre, head of the BIR's large taxpayers division, said in an interview that the decision against SMC was already made by the revenue agency's management committee, a decision-making body of the BIR composed of its high-ranking officials.

The dispute over the issue on requiring SMC to pay back taxes stemmed from the reclassification of its San Mig Light brand. The BIR said San Mig Light was only a variant of the San Miguel Pale Pilsen brand and should therefore be imposed a higher tax. SMC, on the other hand, stressed that San Mig Light was not just a variant but a totally different brand.

Aguirre did not dispel the possibility of the two parties having to face each other in court, saying the firm stance of SMC and the BIR posed uncertainty on who would be favored by the outcome of the dispute.

The BIR is requiring SMC to pay P880 million in back taxes since 1999 because of the error in its classification.

For its part, SMC said taxing San Mig Light as a variant would be a reversal of the product's registration and tax classification as a separate brand subject to a tax rate of P9.15 and later of P10.25 a liter.

SMC added that taxing the company retroactively would be against a provision in the Tax Code, which prohibits reversal or modification of a tax ruling if the move would prejudice a taxpayer.

But while the two parties seem to fight it out over the issue on back taxes, their dispute seemed to remain professional as the BIR recently recognized SMC for being the biggest corporate taxpayer for 2003.

During the recent recognition ceremony for model large taxpayers, the BIR cited SMC for contributing P16 billion in taxes last year.

San Miguel unit posts 15% profit jump

SAN MIGUEL Pure Foods Co. Inc. (SMPFC) reported its consolidated net profit expanded 15 percent to P794 million last year fueled by income from its different food units.

SMPFC also said it surpassed the P691-million net income for 2002. In terms of sales revenues, the food firm reported a 16-percent increase or P5 billion growth to P36 billion.

Income from operations of its different food units also jumped 16 percent to P1.9 billion despite the weaker peso, higher raw material costs and intense competition.

Its poultry business also recorded positive operating profits of P135 million.

Despite the fluctuating demand for flour during the first half of the year, the company's flour business grew volumes by 12 percent and revenues by 22 percent. Purefoods-Hormel also recorded growth in peso sales by 18 percent. SMPFC also said its folding in Magnolia Inc. during the middle of last year boosted the company's overall performance and added to its product lines.

As part of its long-term plan, SMPFC will expand to Southeast Asia and China and move into higher value-added branded segments.

Firm allots ₱2B for RP expansion

By Ronnel W. Domingo

NIDEC Subic Philippines Corp., formerly Sankyo Seiki (Philippines) Manufacturing Corp., yesterday announced it was pouring in some P2 billion for the expansion of its operations at the Subic Bay Freeport.

The company also said the change in name meant it was now fully owned by Nidec Philippines Corp., the local unit of Japan's Nidec Corp.

According to the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority, Kyoto-based Nidec Corp. is the world's top maker of small precision motors.

Nidec also has the biggest world market share for spindle motors, which rotate computer disks and is a key component of hard disk drives in personal computers.

The SBMA quoted Nidec Subic president Makoto Kurata as saying that Sankyo Seiki's decision to be part of Nidec was a result of the two companies' matching corporate strategies.

Makoto said that while Nidec aimed to enhance the group's organizational strength and management, Sankyo Seiki wanted to quickly establish an efficient production system and enhance its customer base for its strategic business in making hard disk drive fluid dynamic bearing (FDB) motor.

SBMA Chair Felicito C. Payumo said Nidec Subic's expansion would reflect in the growth of the company's workforce from 1,400 to 2,000 by October.

Jobs created from the new investment are also expected to hit 4,000 by March next year.

Payumo said the expansion would double Nidec Subic's production to 2 million units of hard disk drive FDB motors a month.

He said Nidec Subic's expanded capacity, which would account for 10 percent of Nidec Corp.'s total production, would enable the subsidiary to export to Korea, China and Japan.

DISCLOSURES

WELLEX Industries Inc. disclosed the resignation of Arthur Ponsaran and Joaquin Obieta as corporate treasurer and corporate secretary, respectively. Kenneth Gatchalian replaced Ponsaran while Ma. Julieta Santos replaced Obieta. The company will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 16, 10 a.m. at the Citibank tower, Makati City. Stockholders of record as of March 19 will be entitled to vote at the meeting.

* * *

PCI Leasing and Finance Inc. bought 120,000 of its own shares at P1.32 each.

* * *

EEI Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on June 18, 10 a.m. at the RCBC Plaza, Makati City. Stockholders of record as of Feb. 28 will be entitled to notice of and to vote at the meeting.

* * *

PHILIPPINE Tobacco Flue-Curing and Redrying Corp. requested exemption from Securities and Exchange Commission's Circular regarding payment date of cash dividend declaration because the company is anticipating difficulties in the distribution of its declared dividends due to the celebration of Holy Week.

* * *

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission approved the change in the name of **Music Corp.** to Music Semiconductors Corp. Its change in primary purpose from that of a holding company to a semiconductor manufacturing company was also approved.

* * *

AYALA Land Inc. disclosed the nomination of Jaime Ayala as director of the company to replace Aurelio Montinola III.

* * *

ROBERTO de Ocampo was nominated director of **Globe Telecom Inc.**

* * *

MERCEDITA Nolledo was nominated director of **Ayala Corp.** to replace Minoru Makihara. ***Compiled by Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research***

CURRENCIES

February 16, 2004 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.784929	1.000000	56.0660
Japan	Yen	0.007441	0.009480	0.5315
United Kingdom	Pound	1.480220	1.885800	105.7293
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.101002	0.128677	7.2144
Switzerland	Franc	0.633826	0.807494	45.2730
Canada	Dollar	0.596270	0.759648	42.5904
Singapore	Dollar	0.468586	0.596979	33.4702
Australia	Dollar	0.618737	0.788271	44.1952
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.082096	2.652590	148.7201
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.209309	0.266660	14.9506
Brunei	Dollar	0.467192	0.595203	33.3707
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000093	0.000119	0.0067
Thailand	Baht	0.020173	0.025700	1.4409
UAE	Dirham	0.213708	0.272264	15.2648
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.274000	71.4281
Argentina	Peso	0.269504	0.343348	19.2501
Brazil	Real	0.269365	0.343171	19.2402
Denmark	Kroner	0.134226	0.171004	9.5875
India	Rupee	0.017389	0.022153	1.2420
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.206588	0.263193	14.7562
Mexico	New Peso	0.071768	0.091433	5.1263
New Zealand	Dollar	0.550171	0.700918	39.2977
Norway	Kroner	0.113300	0.144344	8.0928
Pakistan	Rupee	0.013746	0.017513	0.9819
South Africa	Rand	0.119199	0.151860	8.5142
Korea	Won	0.000067	0.000862	0.0483
Sweden	Kroner	0.109476	0.139472	7.8196
Syria	Pound	0.015241	0.019417	1.0886
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023750	0.030257	1.6964
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000410	0.000522	0.0293

People, Events & Products

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Editor **Aries Espinosa**

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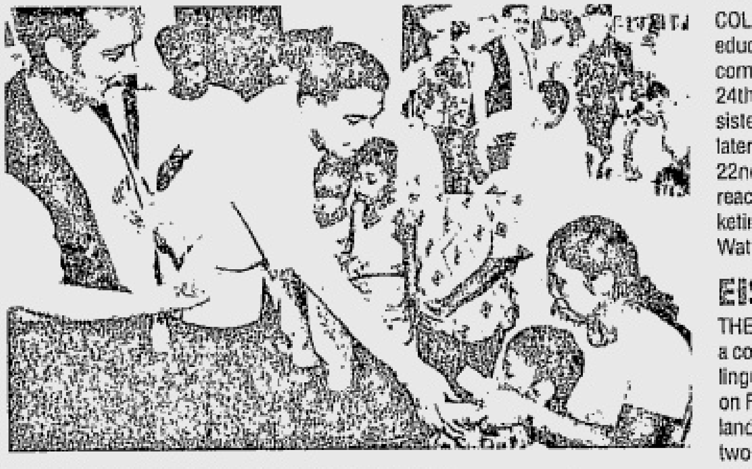

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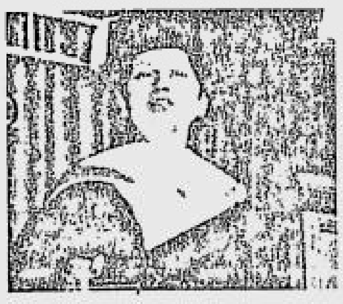

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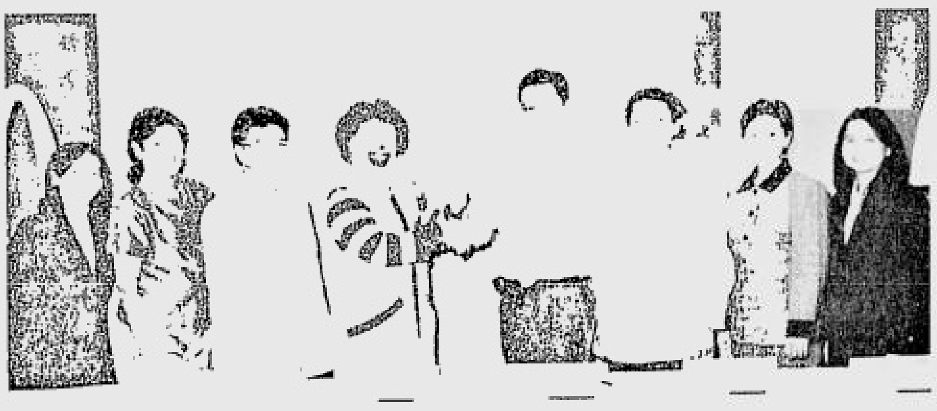
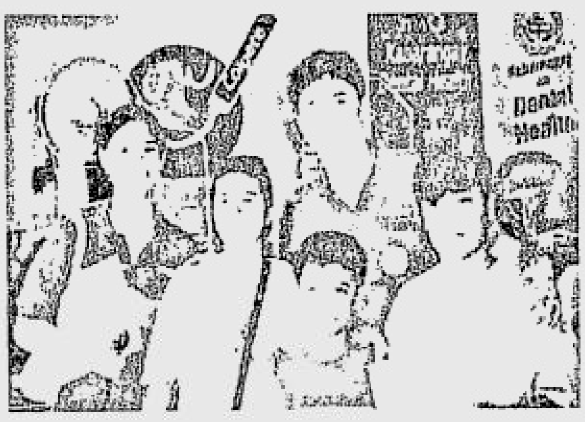


GLOBE MMS TO CAPTURE MCDONALD'S CUSTOMER MOMENTS

In a renewed partnership with McDonald's, one of its biggest clients, Globe Telecom's corporate solutions division, GlobeSolutions, continues to provide its corporate clients with innovative ways to help enhance productivity and customer service. The partnership renewal resulted to an increased number of GlobeSolutions handsets for McDonald's. These will be used for their current 'Love ko 'to' nationwide campaign. Employing the power of MMS technology, McDonald's branch managers will be taking snapshots of their customers' memorable moments. The pictures will be used in posters and displayed in the store. Shown during the contract signing are (from left): Baby Sto. Domingo, manager, manager, GlobeSolutions marketing; Zonito Torrevillas, PR manager of McDonald's; Hector Jaraza, HRD director of McDonald's; Ronald McDonald; Ferdz dela Cruz, head, wireless business group, Globe; Daniel David, head, corporate business, Globe; Maridol Ylanan, head, GlobeSolutions sales; and Bing Barraquias, OIC, GlobeSolutions strategic accounts.

COLGATE PUTS A SMILE ON THE FACES OF PASAY



In its continuing mission to 'Save the World from Cavities' and create a world of healthy smiles, Colgate's Kabarangay sa Dental Health program found its way to Pasay City. Two barangays, Brgy. 145 and 146 in Sto. Nino, Pasay were the beneficiaries of this worthwhile project. Representatives from Colgate, headed by Ricky Espinosa, Colgate senior product manager, and the Pasay group from the Philippine Dental Association, headed by Pasay chapter president Dr. Vinnie Sison, teamed up for the whole-day event. For more information visit www.colgate.com. Shown are Michelle Martinez and Ricky Espinosa of Colgate Phils with Dr. Vinnie Sison awarding the winners of the 'Biggest Smile' contest from Don Carlos Elementary School.

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*P*roduct FILES

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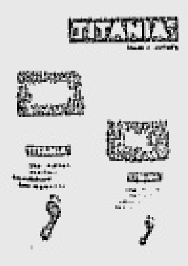

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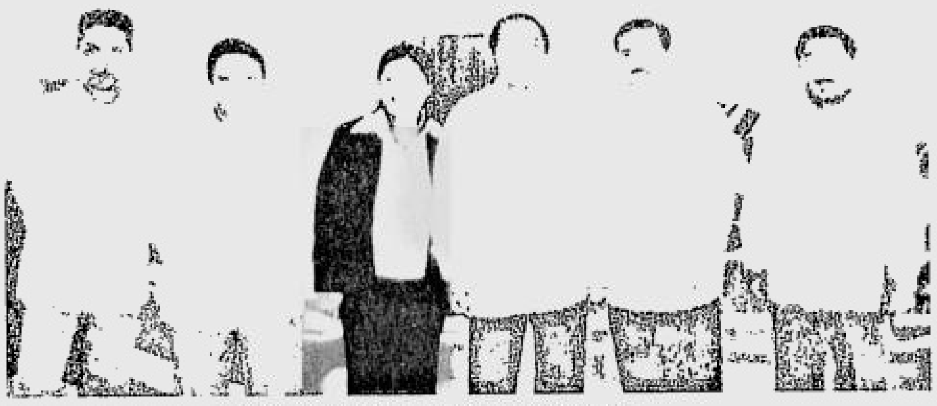

NDCC TO DISTRIBUTE RUBBER BOATS TO LGU'S

The National Disaster Coordinating Council, through the OCD is set to distribute 50 rescue rubber boats to emergency response units in support of their search and rescue operations in coastal areas. Defense Secretary Gen. Eduardo Ermita (3rd from right) and Civil Defense Administrator Gen. Melchor P. Rosales officially received the boats recently from NDCC accredited supplier Torr Equipment, Inc. Also in photo are (from left) Eugene Cabrera, chief of Supplies Administration Office of the Civil Defense Office; Virgilio A. Raymundo and Eduardo T. Torroba of Torr Equipment, Inc. The Patriot Swift rubber boats passed the NDCC's rigid specifications as outlined in its agreement with Torr Equipment, Inc. It comes complete with a high-powered engine when delivered to recipient

People, Events & Products

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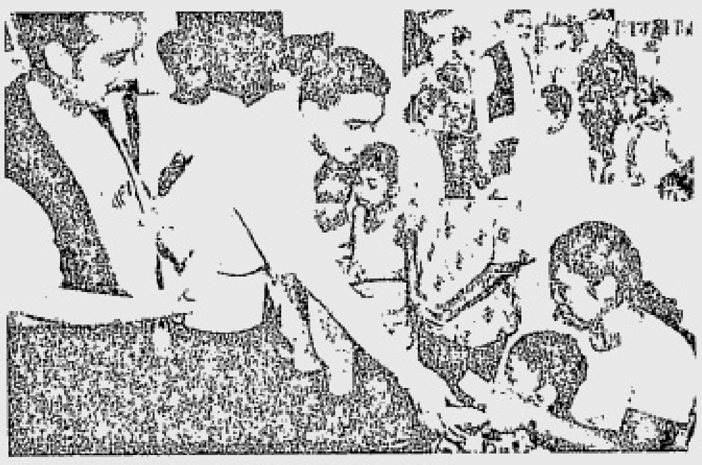

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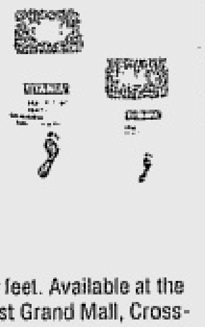

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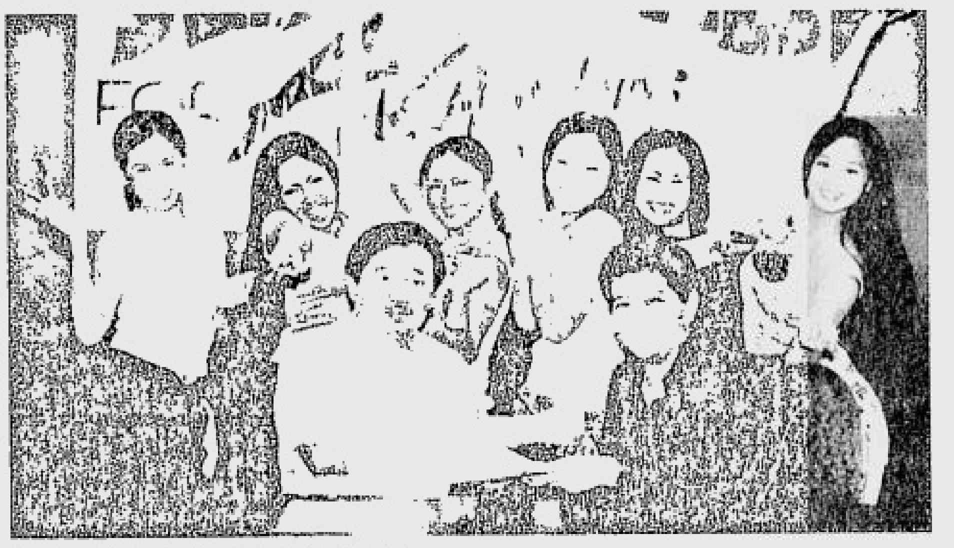

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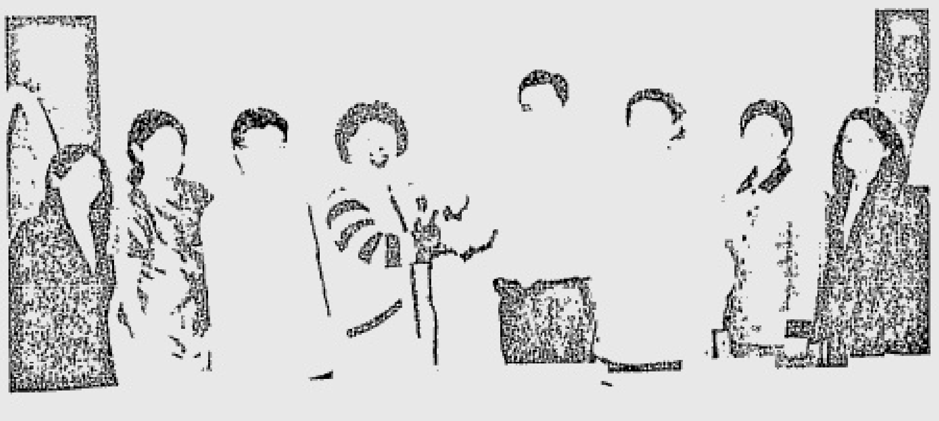
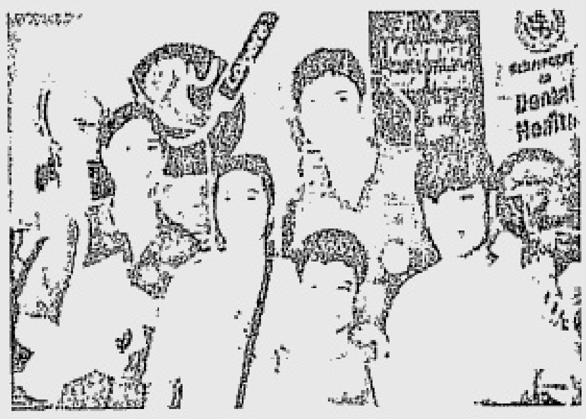


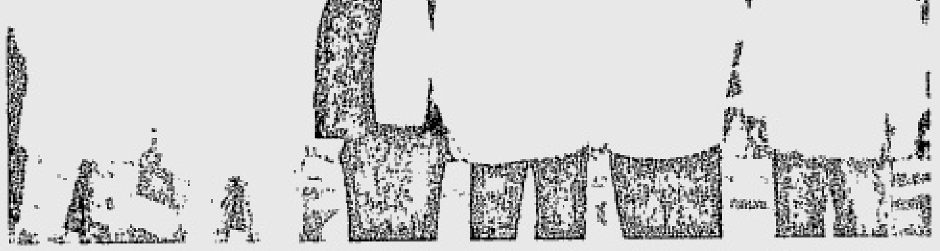
GLOBE MMS TO CAPTURE MCDONALD'S CUSTOMER MOMENTS

In a renewed partnership with McDonald's, one of its biggest clients, Globe Telecom's corporate solutions division, GlobeSolutions, continues to provide its corporate clients with innovative ways to help enhance productivity and customer service. The partnership renewal resulted to an increased number of GlobeSolutions handsets for McDonald's. These will be used for their current 'Love ko 'to' nationwide campaign. Employing the power of MMS technology, McDonald's branch managers will be taking snapshots of their customers' memorable moments. The pictures will be used in posters and displayed in the store. Shown during the contract signing are (from left): Baby Sto. Domingo, manager, manager, GlobeSolutions marketing; Zonito Torrevillas, PR manager of McDonald's; Hector Jaraza, HRD director of McDonald's; Ronald McDonald; Ferdz dela Cruz, head, wireless business group, Globe; Daniel David, head, corporate business, Globe; Maridol Ylanan, head, GlobeSolutions sales; and Bing Barraquias, OIC, GlobeSolutions strategic accounts.



COLGATE PUTS A SMILE ON THE FACES OF PASAY

In its continuing mission to 'Save the World from Cavities' and create a world of healthy smiles, Colgate's Kabarangay sa Dental Health program found its way to Pasay City. Two barangays, Brgy. 145 and 146 in Sto. Nino, Pasay were the beneficiaries of this worthwhile project. Representatives from Colgate, headed by Ricky Espinosa, Colgate senior product manager, and the Pasay group from the Philippine Dental Association, headed by Pasay chapter president Dr. Vinnie Sison, teamed up for the whole-day event. For more information visit www.colgate.com. Shown are Michelle Martinez and Ricky Espinosa of Colgate Phils with Dr. Vinnie Sison awarding the winners of the 'Biggest Smile' contest from Don Carlos Elementary School.



NDCC TO DISTRIBUTE RUBBER BOATS TO LGU'S

The National Disaster Coordinating Council, through the OCD is set to distribute 50 rescue rubber boats to emergency response units in support of their search and rescue operations in coastal areas. Defense Secretary Gen. Eduardo Ermita (3rd from right) and Civil Defense Administrator Gen. Melchor P. Rosales officially received the boats recently from NDCC accredited supplier Torr Equipment, Inc. Also in photo are (from left) Eugene Cabrera, chief of Supplies Administration Office of the Civil Defense Office; Virgilio A. Raymundo and Eduardo T. Torroba of Torr Equipment, Inc. The Patriot Swift rubber boats passed the NDCC's rigid specifications as outlined in its agreement with Torr Equipment, Inc. It comes complete with a high-powered engine when delivered to recepient

REAL ESTATE

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Editor Cesar D. Mangawang

Oft neglected NLE brimming with action

By Tessa R. Salazar

THE 30-YEAR-OLD North Expressway is now undergoing a major makeover. And developers undertaking this massive task say this has been long overdue. For three decades, they say, the Philippines' main passageway to the North has taken a beating—from the elements and from vehicles, especially heavy trucks.

Beat up, and neglected, too. There was a time when the tollgates were not in operation, and motorists could come in and use the highway for free. It was a dream ride, until motorists started feeling every rattling pothole in the slowly deteriorating highway, and when accidents happened, no tollway emergency crew would come in for the rescue.

But the days of neglect are seemingly over. Motorists passing through the North Luzon Expressway can now experience a taste of things to come, as construction for a "revived" NLE has reached the halfway mark.

Smoother ride

Motorists exiting the NLE and interviewed by the INQUIRER have said they had, indeed, noticed smoother ride on the highway comparable with those they have been on abroad. The "rehabilitated" lanes are wider, too, and boast of as many as four lanes north and south bound.

At the moment, more lanes are being constructed to accommodate the increasing traffic volumes. The existing six lanes on the stretch from Balintawak to Valenzuela is being expanded to eight (two lanes added on each side); the four-lane stretch from Valenzuela to Burol will become eight lanes; and from Burol to Sta. Rita, the highway will be expanded to six lanes from four.

The four-lane width from Sta. Rita in Guiginto, Bulacan to Balem, Pampanga to Sta. Ines, however, will maintain the number of lanes but would undergo rehabilitation.

Traffic volume projections

Why not expand the entire stretch of the NLE to eight combined lanes all throughout? Developers say the highway expansion project is based on traffic volume projections. Simply put, the busier the location, the more the highway needs to be fixed. And besides, according to developers, it would be too expensive to maintain such a massive tollway throughout the 84-km stretch of the NLE.

In traffic studies, geometrics ascertain the number of lanes required on a given segment. The number of vehicles exiting portions of the highway was thoroughly studied before determining the necessary number of lanes.

In some stretches, new interchanges had to be added, aside from the upgrading of the existing ones. The new interchanges constructed were the Panipuan/Mexico exits, Angeles and Marilao exits. The soon-to-be-completed Novaliches and Dau flyovers would help decongest bottlenecks occurring in those stretches.

Improved and expanded toll plazas include 17 tollbooths in Balintawak, 23 booths and another two in Bocaue, 11 in Tabang, and 12 in Dau. The improved and added booths are expected to eliminate long queues during rush hours and holidays. The entry booths in Balintawak, for instance, are being reconstructed one km farther north to allow more distance from Edsa, and thus reduce traffic buildup in that area on Edsa.

To further minimize the bottleneck in tollbooths, an open-and-close system will be implemented. This means implementing a flat rate to pass through any exit. In some portions, the travel distance will be the basis of the payment.

When the whole construction is finished, motorists will only need an hour to ply the whole 84-km stretch of the NLE from Balintawak to Sta. Ines Pampanga, 30 minutes shorter from the previous one.

Manila North Tollways Corporation president Jose P. de Jesus said that once NLE becomes fully operational, motorists can now drive to a minimum speed of 80 kilometer per hour with more lanes on both directions.

The cost of rehabilitating the NLE requires that the design of the highway, in general, would be effective for the next 20 years. Thus, developers have projected vehicle traffic volumes for the next 20 to 30 years. At the end of the term, the NLE is scheduled for another redesign.

The makers of the new North Luzon Expressway are proud owners of high technology in highway construction. The expressway is being built by a concession headed by the Lopez-owned Manila North Tollways Corp, Leighton International Australia, Groupe Egis of France and the Philippine National Construction Co.

New technologies

New road construction technologies being applied include reinforced or recycled asphalt produced at Leighton's recycled asphalt plant in Pulilan, Bulacan. The "hot at plant" method was used. Recycled asphalt is combined with virgin aggregates and new bitumen to produce new asphalt mixtures. Stabilized sand, the main ingredient of which is lahar sand from Mt. Pinatubo, was used.

An instrument called a "profilograph" accurately gathers details of the pavements, while the "falling weight deflectograph" determines the strength of pavements from actual deflections of a guillotine-like machine. A paveset—a computerized grade control system—has been used to properly position stabilized sand, lean mix and asphalt.

Asphalt was chosen in favor of concrete materials. It provides good riding characteristics and repairing it is easy, said NLE engineer Pros Tan.

For years, the NLE was paved in concrete and several layers of asphalt. The old asphalt layers have been recycled and now used with the new asphalts.

The wear of water

Water has been a major consideration in the rehabilitation of NLE. Ninety percent of road destruction in a two-season tropical country such as the Philippines is caused by improper drainages. If water seeps through the road, the underlayer could soften. If outer layer support is insufficient, the road cracks. When water continuously runs through the cracks, and vehicles add pressure, potholes are created.

The new NLE is being created in such a way that the under-drain drainage would be composed of perforated pipes. Heavy or continuous rains would normally result in water levels rising and breaching the road structure. The NLE's perforated pipes acts as the drain for the rising water table, preserving the integrity of the structural portion of the highway.

Infrastructure improvement and engineering interventions, however, will not solve all traffic problems.

To keep the highways running, NLE personnel will also have to be "retrained." Enforcers will have to make sure all highway rules would be implemented.

24-hour traffic monitoring

Electronics would also speed up the process of toll collection. Communication linkups in the form of emergency call boxes will be set up every two kilometers. These linkups can determine the exact location of the emergency. There will be a 24-hour traffic monitoring using closed circuit television system, traffic counting stations, variable message signs and even rest areas.

Speed transition lanes have also been added before and after toll gates. Deceleration lanes allow for easy transition for exiting vehicles, while Acceleration lanes would make it easier for vehicles entering the expressway to merge with the traffic.

The maximum design speed of the highway is 100 kph. To monitor highway speeds, speed guns will be installed. The NLE will also soon strictly implement the fast and slow lanes.

All these, including corrective measures after the construction is finished, will cost $371 million. Would it be worth the ride? The answer may lie in the ultimate road test for every Northerner: the annual mad dash to the provinces this Holy Week.

ASIAN-BALINESE inspired architecture and landscaping provides the latest Verdana Homes in Mamplasan a resort-like atmosphere.

Verdana Homes Mamplasan holds preview in Alabang

Text and photo
by Charles E. Buban

YOUNG urban professionals, budding executives, entrepreneurs and their families were treated last Sunday to a preview of a new residential development rising in Laguna province.

Guests who flocked at the activity center area of Alabang Town Center finally saw the latest Verdana Homes project from Community Innovations Inc., a subsidiary of Ayala Land.

Verdana Homes Mamplasan is the sequel to the highly successful community of the same name now flourishing in Bacoor, Cavite.

Says CII president Angela Lacson: "We've created a meticulously planned community to let our buyers live their ideals of what a home should be. We're confident that no other housing development in this category can compare to what we've done here, in terms of features and facilities, design, location, concept and most importantly, security."

35-hectare property

Located in Biñan, Laguna, this 35-hectare residential subdivision is about 12 km from Ayala Alabang and Filinvest, and around 30 km from Makati City.

The development can be reached through the Mamplasan exit of South Luzon Expressway. This 60-meter thoroughfare will be the main access road to the Ayala South, the hub of an expanding integrated educational, commercial and residential township destined to be the vibrant new center in the province of Laguna.

The subdivision is divided into two phases, with lot cuts from 180 sq. m to 500 sq. m and most lots having 200 sq m in size.

Price ranges from P1.4 million up to P4 million (and for as low as P11,400 in monthly amortization).

"The entire layout of Verdana Homes Mamplasan promotes individual interaction through the creation of 'subneighborhoods' in which residents have their own private looped areas that enhances one's sense of ownership and security," says Umali.

A team of experts under the Ayala Property Management Corp.—the same group that handles the conservation of all Ayala-owned and -developed condos, malls and other property—will ensure the long-term maintenance of the community.

Different activities

During the event, guests were ushered in to different activities including spot massage and yoga demonstration, while their little companions got loose within the kiddie entertainment area.

A scale model of the whole property showing its features and amenities plus other diagrams were put on exhibit within the activity area.

"These activities were intended to let our guests experience slices of life inside Verdana Homes Mamplasan, which is predominated by an Asian-Balinese theme designed to be more relaxing, more intimate and more attuned with nature," describes Elsie Paras of CII's Project Development Group manager.

Selecting a designer for your project

By Alexis A. Acacio, Ph.D.

BUILDING DREAMS

WHETHER you would want your house designed or you are the procurement officer of a large corporation needing design consultancy services, you have to look for a qualified and able designer for your project. Finding one that is knowledgeable about the design work required is already half the battle.

Most purchasers still would want to buy the lowest priced design service but this is not to be the sole criteria. Yes, we all would want to save on money but buying the cheapest design service can give you more problems than you think. Consider the following event:

The purchasing department of a large chemical company sought design services for the expansion of their old plant. Eager to negotiate for the lowest price, the manager acquired the services of the lowest bidder. A few weeks into the design stage, the designer finally admitted that they were not capable of doing the job because of their lack of experienced personnel. The company had to look for another design firm to redo the job and as expected, due to the time wasted with the first designer, the completion of the project was delayed.

Selection criteria

In procuring design services, it may be a good idea to establish a good set of selection criteria in soliciting bids and proposals for design services. This should serve as a guide for you or the company that you represent to properly screen prospective service providers. The selection criteria should include:

- **Design Team**—Winning a basketball game needs a good set of players, a good coach and teamwork. The same analogy applies for a design work to be successful. A design team consists of various professionals working together to create a great design. If it is a building to be designed, the team may consist of architects, civil engineers, mechanical engineers, electrical engineers, etc.

Make sure that the company interested has a good list of qualified and knowledgeable personnel.

- **Experience/Track Record**—Look at their past projects. If you want the design of a 30–story building, then check if the company has designed similar projects in the past. Designing a one-story building 30 times is not the same as designing a single, 30-story building.
- **Competence**—The team may be complete with all the professionals but the level of competence may be lacking. Always check and confirm the qualifications of the personnel who will be involved in the project.
- **Reliability**—In assessing a designer, look at the three critical factors of Quality, Cost and Delivery. In simple terms, they should be able to complete a job that satisfies your requirements, at a reasonable cost and within the time period agreed upon.
- **Reputation**—Word goes around very fast for a job well done. Ask your friends and colleagues about the reputation of the company that you would want to do work for you.
- **Work Load**—You do not really want to give your project to someone who is currently out of job neither you would want the services of someone who is too busy. If you call them once and they do not return your call, give them another chance. If still they do not call you, then scratch them off your list. They may be too busy or not equipped to do the job.
- **Reference from Past Clients**—Ask for a list of references and try to call at least two of them. If possible, arrange that you visit a few of their past projects. By this, you can have a good idea on the quality of work that they can do.
- **Integrity**—A very critical character of a good designer is integrity and honesty.
- **Cost**—Compare prices but do not fall into the "cost per square meter trap." If ever you decide basing the work on price, make sure that all details and specifications about the job are well spelled out in your requirements.

Advice to Design Providers. Most companies, after having used the design services of their designers for years *(suki)*, feel very comfortable in doing business with them in most of their projects. Remember that honesty and integrity is equally important with intelligence and know-how. Of course, knowing how to do the job should be a given.

E-mail the author at aaacacio@pacific.net.ph.

Cruising the Groves with Ayala Land, BMW

IN ITS commitment to developing quality communities in the South, Ayala Land Inc. launches another phase of the nature-friendly Ayala Westgrove Heights. Visitors are invited to experience a special event, as Phase 3B-2 is unveiled after its well-received Phase 5 and Ridgewood phases. Its distinct landscaping theme is dubbed "Magnolia Row," which will utilize various species of trees and shrubs belonging to the plant family.

It will be launched on Feb. 22, through an Ayala Land marketing event with car sponsor BMW, "Cruising the Groves." During this event, guests will be allowed to cruise in a BMW vehicle around the dream neighborhood of Ayala Westgrove Heights. They will get the privilege to see different scenic spots like the Westgrove Orchard, the Central Park, and other parts being developed, such as this new phase.

As envisioned, Phase 3B-2 will be visually appealing because of the use of natural enhancements, according to Ayala Westgrove Heights' master planner Joel Luna.

Unique feature

Says Luna: "The unique feature of this phase is the addition of the Magnolia Row landscaping. This is the only area in Ayala Westgrove Heights where there will be colorful magnolia plants in front of the lots, making it unique and exclusive for the lot owners."

A BMW will tour guests to various scenic spots of Ayala Westgrove Heights on Sunday.

The site is within close proximity to Ayala Westgrove Heights' frequented leisure spots like the Central Park and the Westgrove Orchard. Phase 3B-2 will also be within walking distance from the village entrance and St. Scholastica's College, as well as from the Westgrove Plaza retail center, which are both currently undergoing construction.

Diverse community

Luna also reveals that it already has a diverse and steadily growing community. "This area is the perfect place for those people who want to build, to move in and to feel a receptive community. It sits on a promontory—a natural ridge that projects eastward toward Laguna Lake and flanked by two converging rivers," he says. According to him, the configuration gives several lots in Phase 3B-2 a unique vista of the Bay and of the plains of Laguna below.

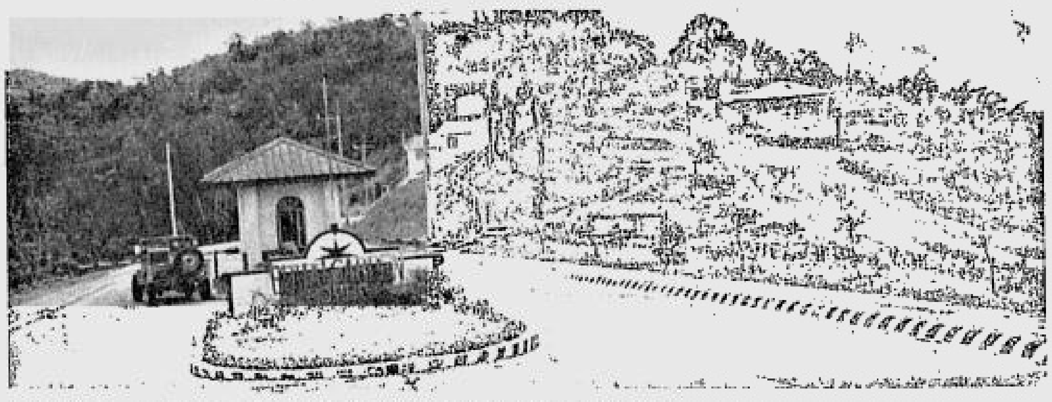
"Cruising the Groves" allows visitors the opportunity to see for themselves their future neighborhood in a BMW, the ideal residential community that combines the rareness of scenic nature escapes with a constantly relaxing living environment.

Local gov't did not spend for Buhai project

By Jerry Esplanada

(Second of three parts)

DELA CRUZ



BUHAI Garden Homes is an ambitious Bulacan Housing and Agro-Industrial project in Bulacan.
PHOTOS BY RANDY HORMILLOSA

NOT a single centavo was spent by the Bulacan provincial government on the ambitious Bulacan Housing and Agro-Industrial project, Gov. Josefina dela Cruz has pointed out.

Buhai, also known as the Buhai Garden Homes, is a private sector enterprise, "but the concept came from us," Dela Cruz told the INQUIRER.

Very good model

"It's a very good model of the public and private sectors partnership," said the governor.

SPECIAL REPORT

So what's the Bulacan capitol's counterpart in Buhai? No public funds are involved, said Dela Cruz. *"Puro laway lang ang sa amin* plus the powers of government," whatever that means.

"It's really just marketing the idea and making ourselves available (for the project)," Dela Cruz said.

For his part, Dominador Tupaz Jr., president of the firm Alto Projekt Asia, the project contractor, said "it's (going to be) self-liquidating for the private (partners); the government will just provide the environment."

Buhai does not fall under one of those build-operate-transfer schemes, but "under the formula the province will get a share of so much percentage… (it's) earnings divided by the cost," Dela Cruz explained.

But critics of the three-term governor have accused her of making a windfall from the multi-billion-peso land development project even before its March 25, 2002 inauguration.

Allegedly with prior information about the Bases Conversion Development Authority's need for a squatter relocation site, the governor, using a dummy, acquired more than 160 hectares of land in what is now the Buhai project site in Norzagaray. The lands were then sold to the BCDA, which donated them to the Bulacan provincial government.

Dela Cruz denied the allegations during a meeting with this reporter at a Mandaluyong City hotel.

Land procurement

Sometime in January 1998, the BCDA initially turned over 60 hectares of land (with the government-owned North Luzon Railways Corp. or Northrail listed as donor), followed by an additional 103 hectares in September 1989.

Norzagaray and DRT folk, as well as sources in the provincial capitol in Malolos City, pointed to provincial board member Teofilo "Jun" Rivera as Dela Cruz's main dummy in the land procurement scheme, a claim denied by the governor.

Norzagaray Mayor Feliciano Legaspi and staff of the town assessor's office disclosed it was Rivera who personally negotiated with landowners and subsequently attended to the land purchase paperwork at the town hall.

Titled lands were sold for P40 per square meter while those with no titles were acquired for P25-30 per sq m, said Bangkal barangay captain Marcelino Punzal.

Punzal should know. At least two of his relatives were among those who sold their property.

Negotiations and actual land sale took place at Rivera's house in Niugan, a barrio in the neighboring town of Angat, according to Punzal.

Today, property in the area can fetch more than P200 per sq m.

Two pieces of property adjacent to the project site now belong to Rivera, Bangkal folk also claimed.

At first, Dela Cruz asserted the provincial government was not part of the Buhai land procurement deal.

"The BCDA bought the lands directly from the landowners and then donated them to the province. We're able to acquire the lands without spending any money," the governor noted.

But she later admitted asking Rivera to help "consolidate these lands for the project."

According to the governor, "this is a project that is very important to me, to (former Gov. Roberto Pagdanganan, now agrarian reforms secretary). So we asked (Rivera) to help."

In taking up the cudgels for Rivera, the governor said the BCDA "needed somebody to help them (in dealing with) local landowners."

"(Rivera) represents the third district. That is why, I assigned him the task. I needed somebody whom I can trust," she said. "Well, if he made some money on the side, you cannot blame him, right?"

At this writing, Rivera has yet to respond to this reporter's request for an interview.

His staff quoted him as saying, "there's another office handling the (Buhai) project," not the board member's.

Asked for Rivera's whereabouts, his staff said their boss "does not report (to his Capitol office) every day. If he has no meetings or appointments here, he's attending to his aquaculture business outside the province."

Helping broker the deal

The governor also described as "normal" the involvement of Bangkal's former barangay captain Narciso Ramos in the land purchase negotiations.

"It's a commercial transaction. If you want to have access to landowners in a particular community, the barangay captain can help you," she said.

Tupaz insisted "it's a normal procedure."

For helping broker the deal, Ramos alone allegedly made at least six percent of P36 million worth of lands bought by BCDA, said Bangkal residents. "That's common knowledge here," disclosed Punzal.

Choice of project site

When interviewed, Dela Cruz also defended the capitol's choice of the project site.

"Seventy percent of Bulakeños live in only 30 percent of our land, (referring to squatter settlements from Malinta up to Calumpit). So you can imagine the congestion, traffic, garbage and the poor quality of life. Yet, we have 70 percent of the land that remains untouched," she noted.

That's the reason the DRT-Norzagaray area was chosen as the project site, she said. "We are actually developing the province's third growth center. Hopefully, Buhai will equalize the development of the eastern portion of Bulacan."

Had the BCDA chosen another squatter relocation site, it would have cost them more, Tupaz claimed.

"(But with the DRT-Norzagaray site) they saved a lot of money," said the businessman. For the relocation of squatters at Fort Bonifacio, a government military facility in southeastern Metro Manila, the BCDA spent P150,000-200,000 per family, Tupaz noted.

The Department of Public Works and Highways, on the other hand, spends a minimum of P120,000 per family for the agency's right-of-way costs.

At Buhai, the BCDA shouldered the construction of the 8.67-km access road as well as right-of-way expenses, said Tupaz.

Subject of controversy

Tupaz's Alto Projekt Asia, meanwhile, has also become a subject of controversy.

When interviewed, Tupaz denied his company's alleged "questionable" track record in the real estate industry.

Contrary to his critics' allegations, the businessman said the firm bagged the Buhai project through the usual public bidding process. "During the time of then Governor Pagdanganan," Tupaz was quick to add.

But he failed to give details about Alto Projekt Asia's previous as well as ongoing land development projects.

The company's corporate secretary Emilia Hillado also declined to provide the same information. Contacted by phone, Hillado said "if you're concerned with the project of Gov. Josie, the best person (to talk to) is with (sic) the governor."

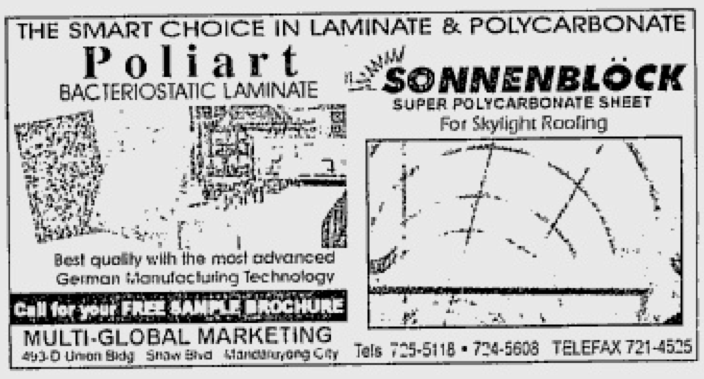
A check with the Securities and Exchange Commission disclosed that Alto Projekt Asia was registered with the state's corporate watchdog on June 19, 1995, two years before the signing of a memorandum of agreement between North Luzon Railways Corp. and the provincial government.

The Pasig City firm has authorized and subscribed capitals of P5 million and P1.25 million, SEC records also showed. Its paid-up capital totaled P312,500, divided among the following stockholders: Tupaz (P109,300); treasurer Fernan Victor Lukban (P202,900); Leonila Tupaz (P100); Vigor Mendoza II (P100); and Enriquito Santiago (P100).

Its incorporation papers said the company's primary and secondary purposes were to acquire real estate by purchase, lease or donation.

The last time Alto Projekt Asia submitted a financial statement was in 1996, according to SEC files.

ECONOMIC housing at the Buhai project



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Idyllic views part of this QC landscape

STRIKING views of blue skies and rolling greens in a location in the heart of Quezon City have been driving the strong demand for Ayala Hillside Estates, a high-end residential subdivision developed by Ayala Land Inc.

As in the first phase of the 22-hectare development offered in late 2002, the second phase of this scenic community was almost completely taken up on the first day it was put on the market in early August. Market reception for the third phase which was offered in November was also unexpectedly strong. The third phase is the second to the last phase of Ayala Hillside Estates.

This early, a number of buyers of the first phases of the project have already begun preparations to build their homes in the subdivision in the next few months. The desire to start home construction so soon indicates that end-users—and not mere real estate speculators—are buying lots in the subdivision.

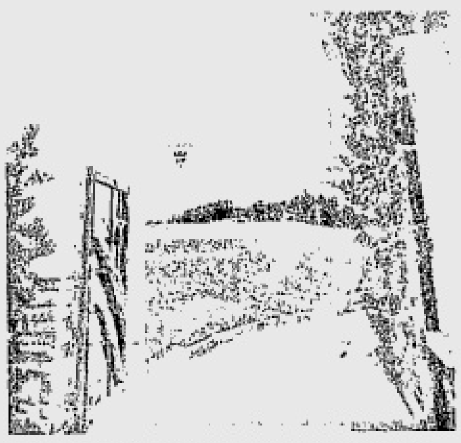
This bodes well for the growth and future of the community, according to project manager Thomas Mirasol. "We expect to have our first residents living in Ayala Hillside Estates very soon. It's very exciting for us and for our customers. We're delighted to see the growth of the community and we are looking forward to helping residents enjoy this special place which we have created for them." he says.

Ideal site

The location and innate attractions of the project truly make it an ideal site for a home. It is within commuting distance of the Makati and Ortigas business districts. In fact, the spires of the latter are visible from the higher lots.

Moreover, the subdivision is carved out from the old Capitol Hills Golf Course affording it great vistas. The residential areas are divided into subneighborhoods, each one nestled among the fairways of the new precision Capitol Hills Golf Course. Unlike the usual subdivision which is laid out in a grid, Ayala Hillside Estates' residential enclaves were designed to be surrounded by the greens. Thus, lots with views of the fairways abound.

According to Vic Ahorro, head of the construction management team, this is not the usual way of developing a subdivision and only came to be in the case of Ayala Hillside Estates because the original owner of the land was a golf club.

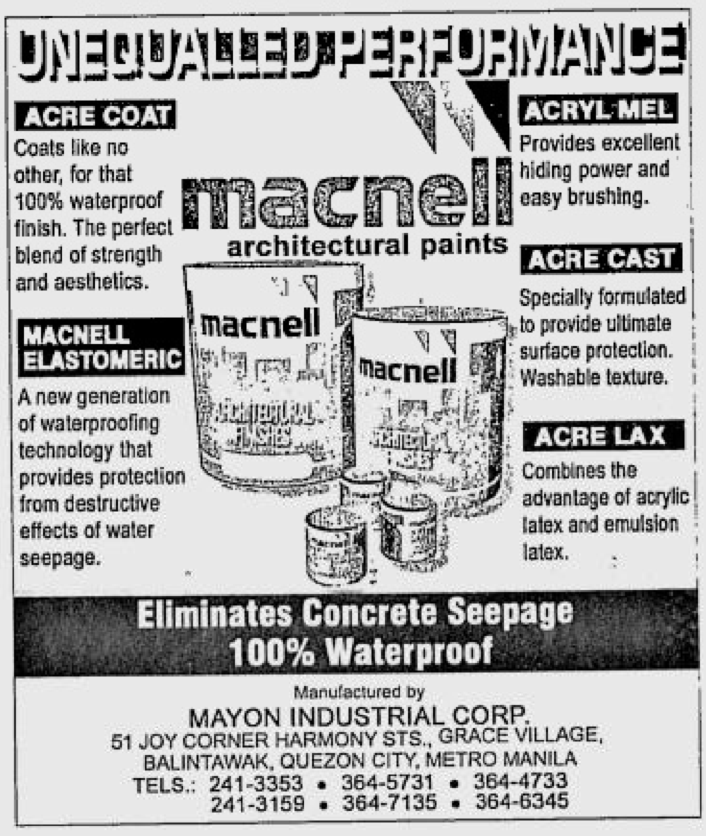


AYALA Hillside Estates remains one of the most scenic and serene communities in bustling Quezon City.

Sounds of nature

The organization of the subdivision into independent residential enclaves also means that the sounds of nature will dominate through the area. No lots have their front to the main road. "Aside from the fact that lots are surrounded by fairways, Ayala Hillside Estates will be a very quiet and secure place to live in," he says.

At Ayala Hillside Estates, neighboring parcels are mostly other lots, parts of the golf course, internal roadways, or in one phase of the development, a scenic lagoon. According to Ahorro, the subdivision will be among the few in Metro Manila to offer waterfront lots. All these add up to peace of mind and tranquil surroundings for the residents, he adds.



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Indeed, living at Las Villas de Manila means enjoying the benefits of a self-contained community because right at its back entrance is the Pacita Complex, a booming center of restaurants, convenience stores, grocery, bus station, wet market churches and banks.

The property is also near schools, amusement parks, golf courses and the Asian Hospital.

Palafox Associates No. 127 in world's top 200 architects

THE LONDON-BASED World Architecture Magazine, in its 12th annual international survey of the world's top architects, cited Palafox Associates No. 127 worldwide for 2004.

For six straight years, Palafox Associates is the only architectural firm from the Philippines that made it to the world's top 500, top 300 and top 200 architects. In the worldwide survey for 2004, the Philippines represented by Palafox Associates, is the only Southeast Asian country included in the list.

Architect and urban planner Felino Palafox Jr. founded in 1989 Palafox Associates, an architectural, urban planning and design firm.

The firm has participated in the planning, architecture and interior design projects in 14 countries. It is the first and only Filipino firm to be accredited by TUV of Germany, with integrated ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 for architecture, interior design, urban planning and master planning.

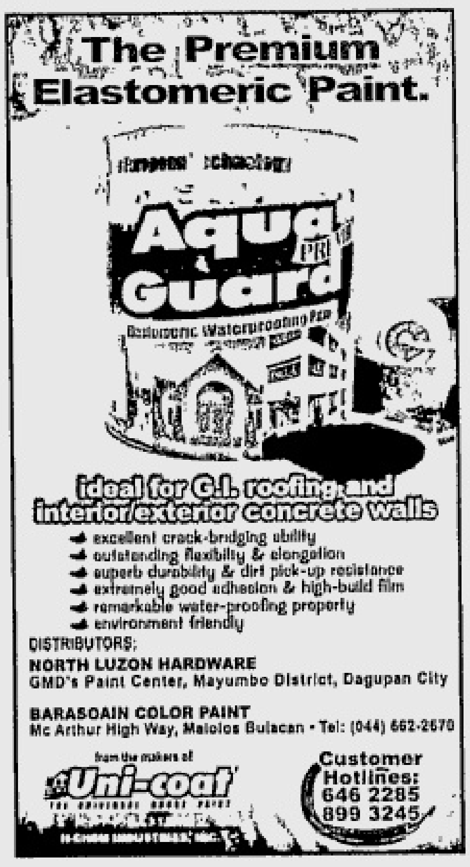
Seminar on realty investing

A SEMINAR on "Investing in Real Estate" will be conducted by the Urban Institute of Real Estate on March 6, from 1:30 to 6 p.m., at the Asian Institute of Management Conference Center, Benavidez cor. Trasierra Street, Legaspi Village, Makati City.

The four-hour lecture will cover the different opportunities and techniques in real estate investments that include the pros and cons of investing in vacant land; buy and sell or lease; build and sell; rehabilitation of foreclosed and damaged property; master leasing; converting apartments to townhouses; and developing vacant/raw lands.

Lecturer is engineer Enrico S. Cruz, a licensed real estate consultant, broker and appraiser and real estate fellow.

For particulars, call Urban Institute at 681-0928, or 0916-4269174.



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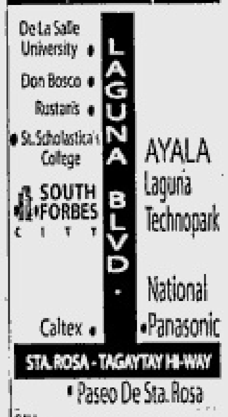

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Land Bank of the Philippines invites interested suppliers who are (a) duly licensed Filipino citizens/sole proprietors; or (b) 60% Filipino-owned partnership/corporations; or (c) two or more suppliers forming into joint ventures jointly and severally liable; or (d) cooperatives duly registered with the CDA; with largest single contract, similar to the items for bid, for the last 2 years, at least equal to 50% of the approved budget; and with Net Financial Contracting Capacity (NFCC) at least equal to the approved budget, to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following items:

ITB No.	Item/Description	Approved Budget	Source of Funds
2003-020	(one (1) year lease of 43 armored vehicles (4&6 wheelers) for various LBP branches	P 38,977,189.02	LBP Funds

Bidding of the above requirements is scheduled on March 10, 2004 at 1:00 p.m. and the Bid Documents may be obtained from the Procurement Division of the General Services Department, 25th Floor, LANDBANK Plaza, M. H. del Pilar St., Malate, Manila.

Interested suppliers are requested to attend the Pre-Bid Conference scheduled on February 24 2004 at the 25th Floor, Conference Room, LANDBANK Plaza, M. H. del Pilar, Malate, Manila.

All particulars relative to the Qualification/Eligibility, Bid Bond, Performance Bond, Pre-bid Conference, Bid Evaluation and Award of Contract shall be governed by the provisions of RA 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

Only those bidders who comply with the Bank's requirements shall be eligible to participate in the bidding.

LANDBANK reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to declare the bidding a failure or waive any defect or informality and to accept bids as may be considered most advantageous to the Bank.

(Sgd.) **ANTONIO T. HERNANDEZ**
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(PDI – February 10 & 17, 2004)

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites interested contractors to apply eligibility and to bid for the project

INSULATION AND CLADDING WORKS FOR THE LGPF STEAMLINE INTERCONNECTION PROJECT STAGE 3 & VARIOUS REFURBISHMENT AND REPAIR WORKS EDC 04-002

The Approved Budget is P15,152,640.00 chargeable against PNOC-EDC fund. The contract duration is 180 calendar days.

Application Forms for Eligibility and Bid Documents may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group (c/o I. M. Corcuera) starting February 4, 2004 upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Pesos: Two Hundred (P200.00).

Application for Eligibility must be submitted to the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group not later than 5:00 p.m. of February 18, 2004

Bid documents will be available for issuance to eligible bidders starting February 27, 2004 upon payment of non-refundable fee of Pesos: One Thousand (P1,000.00).

For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on March 19, 2004, 9:00 a.m. at the Admin. Complex, PNOC-EDC, LGPF, Tongonan, Leyte. Site inspection will follow thereafter.

Contractor, not yet included in the PNOC-EDC's List of Registered Contractors, who wishes to participate in the public bidding, in order to facilitate eligibility check/screening is requested to register with the said registration office by submitting the following basic requirements which should be maintained current and updated every year: 1) DTI Business Name Registration and/or Certified true copy of valid Sec Registration Certificate as appropriate, 2) Current Mayor's Permit/Municipal License, 3) Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN), 4) Value Added Tax (VAT) Certificate of Registration, 5) Notarized statement that contractor/firm is not "blacklisted" or barred from bidding by CIAP, 6) Audited Financial Statements, stamped "received" by the BIR or its duly accredited and authorized Institutions for the immediately preceding calendar year, showing among others, its total and current assets and liabilities inclusive of Income Tax Return and Receipt; and 7) Contractor's License, where applicable. A Certificate of Submission shall be issued to contractor upon approval.

Sealed bids shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group at the above address not later than 2:00 p.m. of April 1, 2004 and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

PNOC-EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose bid is considered most advantageous to PNOC-EDC.

(Sgd.) PAUL A. AQUINO
President

(PDI - Feb 17, 2004)

PNOC-EDC
Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, 1634 Taguig, Metro Manila, Philippines
Tel. (632) 893-6001 / Fax (632) 840-1575

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites interested contractors registered with the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) and classified, at least, as Medium A - Road, Highway pavement, Railways, etc. to apply for eligibility and to bid for the project.

CONCRETING OF 2.5 KMS. TICALA AND PUHAGAN ROADS AT SOUTHERN NEGROS GEOTHERMAL PROJECT EDC04-007

The Approved Budget is P9,497,170.00 chargeable against PNOC-EDC fund. The contract duration is 120 calendar days.

Application Forms for Eligibility and Bid Documents may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group (c/o I. M. Corcuera) starting February 4, 2004 upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Pesos: Two Hundred (P200.00).

Application for Eligibility must be submitted to the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group not later than 5:00 p.m. of February 18, 2004

Bid documents will be available for issuance to eligible bidders starting February 27, 2004 upon payment of non-refundable fee of Pesos: One Thousand (P1,000.00).

For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on March 5, 2004, 9:00 a.m. at the Admin. Complex, PNOC-EDC, SNGPF, Ticala, Valencia, Neg. Or. Site inspection will follow thereafter.

Contractor, not yet included in the PNOC-EDC's List of Registered Contractors, who wishes to participate in the public bidding, in order to facilitate eligibility check/screening is requested to register with the said registration office by submitting the following basic requirements which should be maintained current and updated every year: 1) DTI Business Name Registration and/or Certified true copy of valid Sec Registration Certificate, as appropriate, 2) Current Mayor's Permit/Municipal License; 3) Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN); 4) Value Added Tax (VAT) Certificate of Registration, 5) Notarized statement that contractor/firm is not "blacklisted" or barred from bidding by CIAP. 6) Audited Financial Statements, stamped "received" by the BIR or its duly accredited and authorized Institutions for the immediately preceding calendar year, showing among others, its total and current assets and liabilities inclusive of Income Tax Return and Receipt; and 7) Contractor's License, where applicable. A Certificate of Submission shall be issued to contractor upon approval.

Sealed bids shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group at the above address not later than 2:00 p.m. of March 30, 2004 and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

PNOC-EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose bid is considered most advantageous to PNOC-EDC.

(Sgd.) PAUL A. AQUINO
President

(PDI - Feb. 17, 2004)

PNOC-EDC
Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, 1634 Taguig, Metro Manila, Philippines
Tel. (632) 893-6001 / Fax (632) 840-1575

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites interested contractors to apply eligibility and to bid for the project

INSULATION AND CLADDING WORKS FOR THE NORTHERN NEGROS GEOTHERMAL PROJECT - FLUID COLLECTION AND REINJECTION SYSTEM EDC 04-003

The Approved Budget is P24,377,120.00 chargeable against PNOC-EDC fund. The contract duration is 19. calendar days.

Application Forms for Eligibility and Bid Documents may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group (c/o I. M. Corcuera) starting February 27, 2004 upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Pesos: Two Hundred (P200.00).

Application for Eligibility must be submitted to the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group not later than 5:00 p.m. of February 18, 2004

Bid documents will be available for issuance to eligible bidders starting February 27, 2004 upon payment of non-refundable fee of Pesos: One Thousand (P1,000.00).

For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on March 12, 2004, 10:00 a.m. at the Malum Basecamp, Bago City, Neg. Occ. Site inspection will follow thereafter.

Contractor, not yet included in the PNOC-EDC's List of Registered Contractors, who wishes to participate in the public bidding, in order to facilitate eligibility check/screening is requested to register with the said registration office by submitting the following basic requirements which should be maintained current and updated every year: 1) DTI Business Name Registration and/or Certified true copy of valid Sec Registration Certificate, as appropriate, 2) Current Mayor's Permit/Municipal License; 3) Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN), 4) Value Added Tax (VAT) Certificate of Registration, 5) Notarized statement that contractor/firm is not "blacklisted" or barred from bidding by CIAP, 6) Audited Financial Statements, stamped "received" by the BIR or its duly accredited and authorized Institutions for the immediately preceding calendar year, showing among others, its total and current assets and liabilities inclusive of Income Tax Return and Receipt; and 7) Contractor's License, where applicable. A Certificate of Submission shall be issued to contractor upon approval.

Sealed bids shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group at the above address not later than 2:00 p.m. of April 1, 2004 and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

PNOC-EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose bid is considered most advantageous to PNOC-EDC

(Sgd.) PAUL A. AQUINO
President

(PDI - Feb 17, 2004)

DAEWOO AND NISSAN BUSES FOR SALE!

For inquiries and further details, please call Mr. Ed Cruz at (0917) 822 0270.

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS
NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
BIR Road, East Triangle, Diliman, Quezon City

MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR

No. 02-02-2004

SUBJECT : **OCULAR INSPECTIONS OF ALL RADIO STATIONS OPERATED BY PUBLIC TELECOMMUNICATIONS ENTITIES (PTE)**

Pursuant to Act No. 3846, as amended (Radio Control Law), RA7925 (Public Telecommunications Policy Act), EO546 series of 1979 and in order to ensure that all radio stations are operating within the limits of the radio station licenses to prevent harmful interference, the following guidelines in the conduct of inspections are hereby promulgated.

1. Inspections shall be conducted only by personnel of the National Telecommunications Commission (Commission) with valid Mission Order signed by any of the Regional Directors or by any of the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioners. The Commission may seek the assistance of the law enforcement agencies as they deem necessary; provided, that in the conduct of the inspection, an NTC representative shall always be present.
2. The public telecommunications entities (PTE) operating radio stations including cell base stations and links are directed to allow personnel of the Commission with valid Mission order to conduct ocular and physical inspections on the radio stations, cell base stations and links.
3. The Regional Directors are directed to strictly observe their geographical areas of responsibilities and shall submit written report of inspection to the Commissioner not later than (5) working days from the date of inspection.
4. Any person or public telecommunications entity found violating this memorandum circular shall be dealt with in accordance with law.
5. This memorandum circular shall take effect fifteen (15) days after publication in a newspaper of general circulation and three (3) certified true copies furnished the UP Law Center.

Quezon City, Philippines, February 13, 2004.

(Sgd.) **RONALD OLIVAR SOLIS**
Commissioner

(Sgd.) **KATHLEEN G. HECETA**
Deputy Commissioner

(Sgd.) **JORGE V. SARMIENTO**
Deputy Commissioner

(PDI - Feb. 17, 2004)

PNOC-EDC
Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, 1634 Taguig, Metro Manila, Philippines
Tel: (632) 893-6001 / Fax (632) 840-1575

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites interested contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the project:

FABRICATION OF NINE (9) UNITS STAINLESS STEEL TANKS EDC 04-013

The Approved Budget is P7,043,000.00 chargeable against PNOC-EDC fund. The contract duration is 90 calendar days.

Application Forms for Eligibility and Bid Documents may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group (c/o I. M. Corcuera) starting **February 4, 2004** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Pesos: Two Hundred (P200.00).

For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on **February 23, 2004, 10:00 a.m.** at the CAG Conference Rm., Bldg. 5 at the above address. Site inspection will follow thereafter.

Contractor, not yet included in the PNOC-EDC's List of Registered Contractors, who wishes to participate in the public bidding, in order to facilitate eligibility check/screening is requested to register with the said registration office by submitting the following basic requirements which should be maintained current and updated every year: 1) DTI Business Name Registration and/or Certified true copy of valid Sec Registration Certificate, as appropriate; 2) Current Mayor's Permit/Municipal License; 3) Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN); 4) Value Added Tax (VAT) Certificate of Registration; 5) Notarized statement that contractor/firm is not "blacklisted" or barred from bidding by CIAP; 6) Audited Financial Statements, stamped "received" by the BIR or its duly accredited and authorized institutions for the immediately preceding calendar year, showing among others, its total and current assets and liabilities inclusive of Income Tax Return and Receipt, and 7) Contractor's License, where applicable. A Certificate of Submission shall be issued to contractor upon approval.

Applications for Eligibility and sealed bids shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group at the above address **not later than 2:00 p.m. of March 9, 2004** and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

PNOC-EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose bid is considered most advantageous to PNOC-EDC.

(Sgd.) **PAUL A. AQUINO**
President

(PDI - Feb. 17, 2004)

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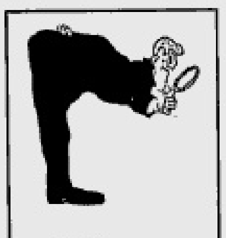

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REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE
BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE
Quezon City

February 9, 2004

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) invites interested parties to apply for eligibility and to bid for the:

Name of Project	:	Comprehensive Maintenance Services for Network Equipment
Location of the Project	:	BIR National Office RR 4 - San Fernando, Pampanga RR 5 - Valenzuela RR 6 - Manila RR 7 - Quezon City RR 8 - Makati RR 9 - San Pablo City RR 13 - Cebu
Contract Duration	:	May 1 to December 31, 2004
Approved Budget	:	P1,495,068.00
Source of Funding	:	BIR's Appropriations

All interested parties may get the bidding documents from the BAC Secretariat, c/o Procurement Division at Room 605, 6th Floor, BIR-NOB, Diliman, Quezon City starting **February 11, 2004,** upon payment of non-refundable fee of Five Hundred Pesos (P500.00).

A Pre-Bid Conference will be held on **February 24, 2004 at 9:00 a.m.** at the **3/F, Executive Conference Room, BIR-NOB, Diliman, Quezon City.**

Deadline for the submission and opening of elegibility requirements, technical and financial proposals shall be on **March 8, 2004 at 1:30 p.m.,** at the **3/F, Executive Conference Room, BIR-NOB, Diliman, Quezon City,** and followed by the opening of the bids.

The criteria to be used by the BIR in the following: (a) eligibility check of prospective bidders; (b) examination and evaluation of bids; and (c) post-qualification, shall be on a non-discretionary "pass/fail" basis.

The BIR assumes no obligation whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the bidders for any excuse or loss that they may incur in the preparation of their bid. The BIR also reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any of the required formality therein and accept the bids most advantageous to the government.

For particulars, please inquire from the BAC Secretariat, thru the Chief, Procurement Division at Room 605, 6th Floor, BIR-NOB, Diliman, Quezon City or call telephone nos. **926-5547, 926-5538** and **928-2026** (fax), or e-mail us at nelly.ibo@bir.gov.ph until March 7, 2004.

(Sgd.) **MILAGROS V. REGALADO**
Assistant Commissioner-Legal Service
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - Feb. 17, 2004)

Republic of the Philippines
Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
REGIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Cotabato City
FOURTH LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
SECOND REGULAR SESSION

MUSLIM MINDANAO AUTONOMY ACT NO. 152

Begun and held in Cotabato City, on Monday, the seventh day of January, two thousand two.

AN ACT CHANGING THE NAME OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF PAGAGAWAN IN THE PROVINCE OF MAGUINDANAO TO MUNICIPALITY OF DATU MONTAWAL.

Be it enacted by the Regional-Legislative Assembly in session assembled:

SECTION 1. - The name of the Municipality of Pagagawan in the Province of Maguindanao is hereby changed to Municipality of Datu Montawal.

SECTION 2. - This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

APPROVED:

(Sgd.) **ISMAEL B. ABUBAKAR, JR.**
Speaker

This Act was passed by the Regional legislative Assembly on June 9, 2003.

(Sgd.) **DATU MAMA M. AMAPATUAN**
Secretary-General

APPROVED:
(Sgd.) **PAROUK S. HUSSIN**
Regional Governor
Date: 07/07/03

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9/F, L.V. Locsin Building
Ayala corner Makati Avenue
Makati City

TransCo
National Transmission Corporation

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

AD NO. 2004-005

PD Ref No. PB040116-PP0012 / **PR No.:** GSD-04-005420

1. The **NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION, BIDS AND AWARD COMMITTEE FOR CORPORATE TRANSCO,** invites local bidders / contractors to apply for eligibility who are:
   a. Duly licensed Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships; or
   b. Partnership duly organized under the laws of the Philippines and of which at least seventy five percent (75%) of the interest belongs to citizens of the Philippines; or
   c. Corporations duly organized under the laws of the Philippines, and of which at least seventy five percent (75%) of the outstanding capital stock belongs to citizens of the Philippines; or
   d. Cooperatives duly registered with the Cooperatives Development Authority (CDA)

   The abovementioned contractors should have the following valid License and Registration Particulars issued by PCAB.

   License : at least "Category D"
   Registration : at least "SMALL B"
2. Contract : **SUPPLY OF LABOR AND MATERIALS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF TRANSCO PARKING AREAS AT BANTAYOG NG MGA BAYANI MINI-MUSEUM & PARK.**
3. The contract to be performed by the successful bidder shall consist of furnishing all labor, materials, supplies, tools, equipment and other incidentals necessary for the construction of TRANSCO PARKING AREAS AT BANTAYOG NG MGA BAYANI MINI-MUSEUM & PARK please refer to the attached General Technical Requirements.

   The budget for the Contract to be Bid is *P2,684,000.00* from the Internal Cash Generation of the National Transmission Corp. (TransCo).
4. Application for Eligibility and Eligibility Forms will be available for issuance starting **February 7, 2004 to February 20, 2004** at the BAC Secretariat, National Transmission Corp., MMD, G/F Bldg. 2, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City upon presentation of original PCAB License and a payment of non-refundable fee of **TWO HUNDRED Pesos (P 200.00)** per copy.
5. Deadline for submission of Letter of Intent, duly accomplished Application for Eligibility, Eligibility Forms, documents and statements shall be on or before *10:00 AM of February 23, 2004* and shall be submitted at the registration office and address mentioned above. If the date is a non-working day or declared non-working day, the deadline for submission shall be moved to the next working day immediately following said date. Late submission and/or incomplete application shall not be accepted. Eligible bidders shall be notified on or before **February 26, 2004**.
6. A complete set of bidding documents may be purchased by eligible bidders from **February 27, 2004 to March 12, 2004** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Php300.00.
7. Pre-Bid Conference will be held on **March 8, 2004, 10:00 AM** at National Transmission Corp., MMD Conference Room, G/F Bldg. 2, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City.
8. Submission of Technical and Price Proposals of eligible bidders shall be at **10:00 AM on March 19, 2004** at National Transmission Corp., MMD Conference Room, G/F Bldg. 2, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City. The technical proposal will be opened immediately in the presence of Bidder's representative who choose to attend.
9. All particulars relative to the eligibility, bidding, evaluation of bids and award of contract shall be governed by the Implementing Rules and Regulations of R.A. 9184 otherwise known as the Government Procurement Act.
10. TransCo reserves the right to reject any Application for Eligibility or all bids without offering any reasons, waive any required formality therein, and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the government.
11. Additional information shall be furnished upon request. All communications should be addressed to the undersigned at the aforementioned address.

(Sgd.) **A.G. LABAYANI**
Chairman, Bids and Award Committee

(PDI - Feb. 10 & 17, 2004)

GOVERNMENT SERVICE INSURANCE SYSTEM
NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

(Reinsurance of NAPOCOR Minor Policies)

The DOE NPC GSIS Joint Bidding Committee (JBC), thru the Eligibility and Evaluation Group (EEG), is inviting qualified local and foreign reinsurance companies/brokers to apply for eligibility and to bid for the reinsurance of the National Power Corporation's Aviation Hull Insurance Policy with an indicative budget of US$321,809.81, and Protection & Indemnity Cover with an indicative budget of US$202,352.85, both all inclusive, for the periods 12NN 31 January 2004 to 12NN 31 January 2005, and 12NN 20 February 2004 to 12NN 20 February 2005, respectively.

SCHEDULE OF BIDDING ACTIVITIES

ISSUANCE OF ELIGIBILITY & BIDDING DOCUMENTS	PRE-BID CONFERENCE	SUBMISSION AND OPENING OF ELIGIBILITY AND BID ENVELOPES
March 1 - March 11, 2004 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. JBC Secretariat 7th Floor-EDPC Bldg. BSP Complex Roxas Blvd., Manila	March 11, 2004 2:00 p.m. Board Rm., 6th Floor-DOF Building Roxas Blvd., Manila	March 23, 2004 2:00 p.m. Office of the Chairman Board Rm., 6th Floor-DOF Building Roxas Blvd., Manila

Eligibility and bid documents shall be issued to applicants upon filing a Letter of Intent to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid and payment of a non-refundable fee of US$200.00 for each policy applied for, to the National Power Corporation.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Screening, Pre-Bid Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Sufficiency of Bid Security, Post Qualification, and Award of Contract shall be governed by the provisions of existing laws, rules and regulations.

The JBC and EEG reserve the right to reject any and all bids or Letters of Intent, waive any defect therein and accept the offer which they deem responsive and most advantageous to the government.

(Sgd.) **ATTY. PORFIRIO B. VILLENA, JR.**
Director IV, PDMSG
Presiding Officer, Evaluation and Eligibility Group
DOE-NPC-GSIS Joint Bidding Committee

Inquirer--Feb.17 & 24, 2004

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through its

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

deeply condoles with the bereaved family of

LETICIA S. DOMINGO

Former Member, Board of Trustees and Corporate Secretary

who peacefully passed away in the Grace of our Lord on February 14, 2004 at the age of 78.

We join her husband **Eufemio**; children **Rafael** & **Roni**, **Maria Elena**, **Esther** & **Bobby**; grandchildren **Gabriel**, **Andrea** & **Erica** and relatives in praying for her eternal rest.

Her remains lie in state at Loyola Memorial Chapels, Inc., Guadalupe, Makati City.

Cremation will be today, Tuesday, February 17, 2004.

ARSENIO LIGON ORTEGA

Chairman and CEO
A. L. ORTEGA MACHINERIES (ALOMAC)
Cagayan de Oro City, Iligan City and Bukidnon

COTABATO DEVELOPMENT & SUPPLY COMPANY, INC. (CODESCO)
(Cotabato City, Tacurong and Kidapawan, Cotabato)

Member
Executives Band

Joined his Creator at the age of 91 on February 13, 2004.

His only daughter **Zenaida**; son-in-law **Ruben Cabrera**; grandchildren **Arman, Mario** and **Vic Mina, Elizabeth, Marica** and **Jomar Castillo**, and **Anthony**; great-grandchildren **Melissa**, **Gabriel** and **Paeng**; sister **Elisa Ortega-Ramos**, brother **Lorenzo**; sister **Emilia** and brother-in-law **Tiburcio Tecson**; brother-in-law **Manny Lina**, sister-in-law **Celeste Estacio-Ortega**; and his nieces and nephews request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His mortal remains lie in state at the Mortuary of St. John the Baptist, Santo Domingo Church, Quezon Avenue, Quezon City.

Cremation will take place at the La Funeraria Paz Crematory, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City on February 18, 2004 after the 10:00 o'clock Holy Sacrifice of the Mass at the Santo Domingo Church.

In lieu of floral offerings, kindly give your donations to the Mary the Queen Charity Clinic, Madison St., Greenhills, San Juan.

Fr. Dominic Scheerer, OCD

Died in the peace of the Lord on February 11, 2004 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin USA at the age of 81.

A memorial mass will be held at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Shrine Church, Broadway, New Manila, Quezon City on Thursday, February 19, 2004 at 6:00 p.m.

In Loving Memory

On the First Death Anniversary of

GENERAL ROMEO C. ESPINO

Former Chief of Staff
Armed Forces of the Philippines

December 20, 1914 – February 17, 2003

His loving wife **Belle**; children **Leslie** and **Diana**, **Ralph** and **Cristina**, **Maria Teresa** (†) and **Ron**, **Ricardo** and **Maribelle**, **Helene** and **Tito**; grandchildren **Monica** and **Michael**, **Richard**, **Adelaide**, **Paolo**, **Rhoni**, **Guillermo**, **Nikki** and **Giancarlo**; great-grandchildren **Francesca** and **Giana** request relatives, friends and the pious reader to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass will be offered for him today, February 17, 2004, at the following:

Libingan ng Mga Bayani Chapel Fort Bonifacio, Makati	11:00 a.m.
Holy Child Chapel Bonifacio Naval Station, Fort Bonifacio	5:00 p.m.
St. Ignatius Cathedral Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City	5:15 p.m.
Our Lady of All Nations Chapel Villamor Air Base, Pasay City	5:15 p.m.
St. Michael's Chapel Fort Bonifacio, Makati	5:30 p.m.
Mary the Queen Parish Greenhills, San Juan	6:00 p.m.
St. Alphonsus Mary de Liguori Parish Magallanes Village, Makati	6:00 p.m.
Santuario de San Antonio Forbes Park, Makati	6:00 p.m.
Sts. Peter and Paul Parish Poblacion, Makati	6:30 p.m.
St. James the Great Parish Ayala Alabang, Muntinlupa	6:30 p.m.

CARMEN ABAD Vda. de CÁRDENAS

*Peacefully joined her Creator, her loving husband **Manuel Perez Cárdenas**, and her son **Manuel Jr. (Ling)** on February 15, 2004 at the age of 86.*

Her children **MIKE & KAREN**, and **PENNY**; her grandchildren **SANDY & MARVIN KEENE, TIM**, and relatives request the reader to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Christ the King Parish, Green Meadows Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Wednesday, February 18, 2004 at the La Loma Cemetery.

RAMON Y. LOPEZ

December 25, 1929 - February 13, 2004

His wife **Agnes**; son **Rey**; daughter-in-law **Ella**; grandchildren **Miko**, **Jimbo**, **Carlo** and **Mulla**; brothers and sisters **Junior**, **Fely** (†), **Corazon** (†), **Mely**, **Lita**, **Caridad**, **Tonnie**; nieces and nephews; request the pious readers to say a little prayer for the repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the House of Many Mansions, McArthur Hi-way, Angeles City. The body will be transferred to the Sta. Monica Chapel, Quirino Avenue, Don Galo, Parañaque City on Tuesday, February 17, 2004.

Interment will be at the Manila Memorial Park, Sucat Avenue, Parañaque City on February 19, 2004, after the 2:00 p.m. Mass.

"...absent with the body to be present with the Lord:" – Matthew 10:39

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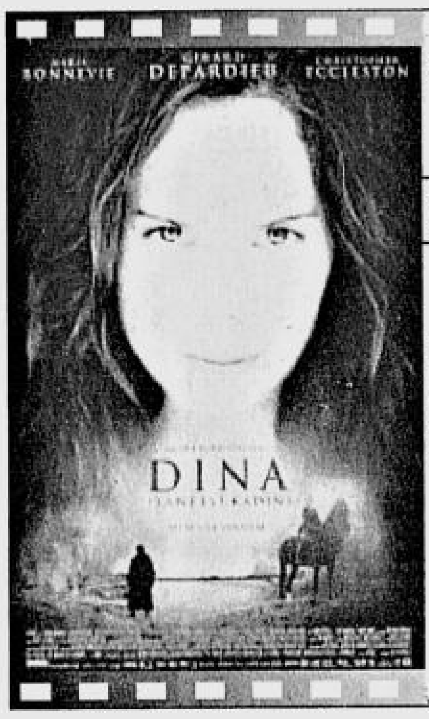

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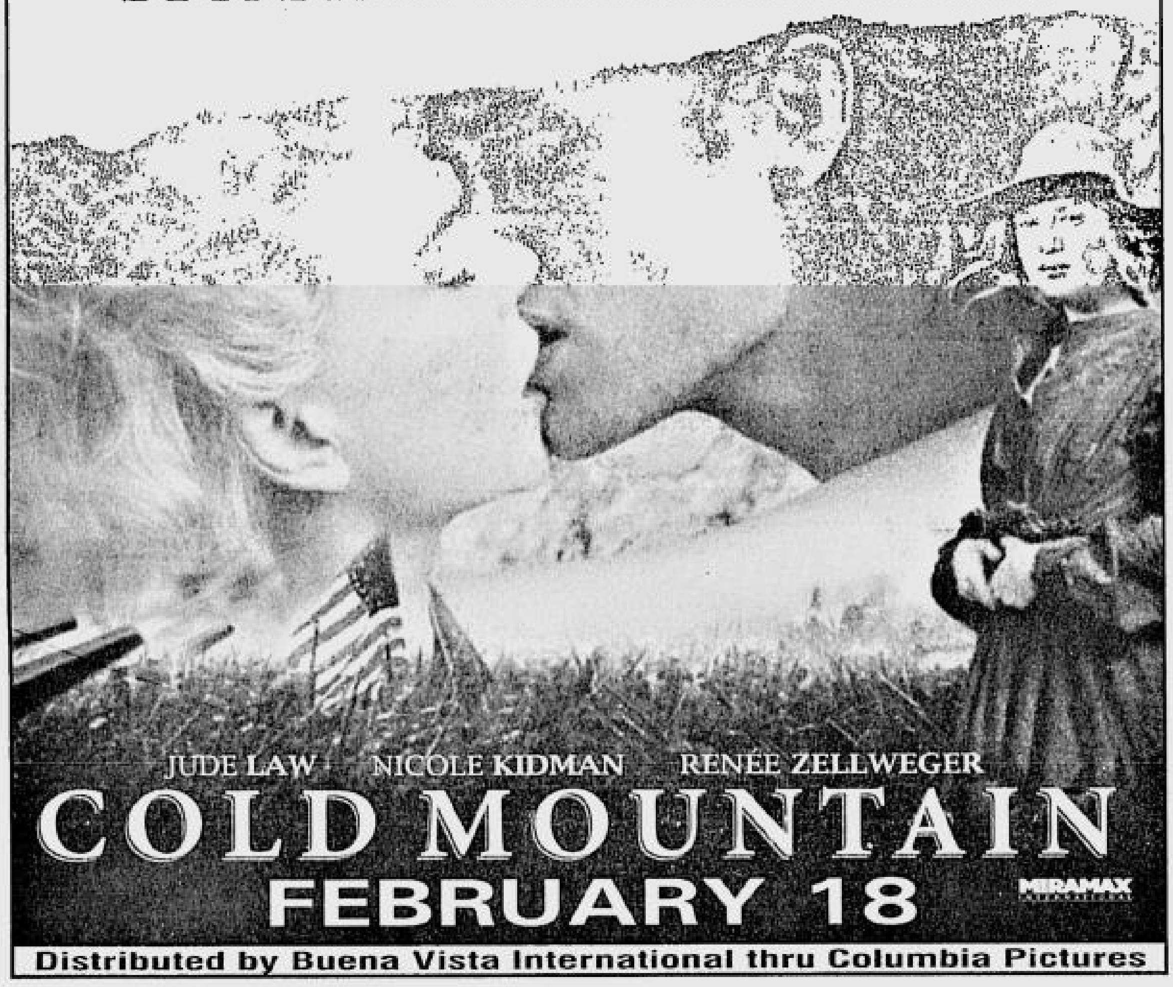

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BEST ACTOR
2003 Venice International Film Festival

WINNER
BEST FILM OF THE YEAR
BEST ACTOR
2003 National Board of Review

WINNER
BEST ACTRESS
2003 Online Film Critics Society

WINNER
BEST ACTRESS
2003 Los Angeles Film Critics Association

WINNER
BEST ACTRESS
2003 Chicago Movie Critics

WINNER
BEST ACTRESS
2003 San Diego Film Critics

WINNER
BEST ACTRESS
2003 Southeastern Film Critics

WINNER
BEST PICTURE
2003 NY Online Film Critics

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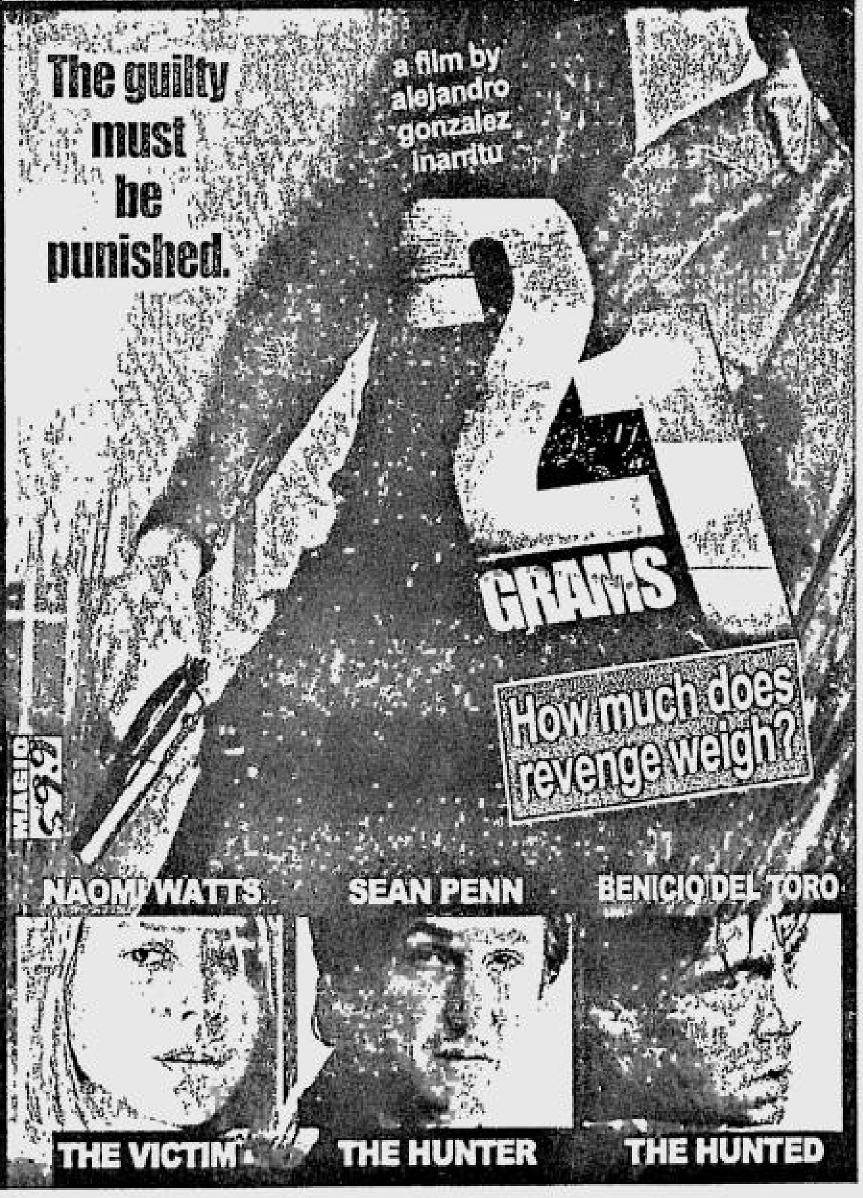
BEST ACTRESS
2003 Florida Film Critics

WINNER
BEST ACTOR
BEST ACTRESS
2003 Washington DC Film Critics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SEAN PENN
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4 MAGIC KITCHEN 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 9:50
5 CHASING LIBERTY 10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 9:50
6 MILAN 10:50, 1:30, 4:10, 6:50, 9:30 SDDS
7 A GOOD LAWYER'S WIFE 12:00, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:00, 10:00
8 THE LAST SAMURAI 10:20, 1:00, 4:00, 7:00, 10:00
9 MONA LISA SMILE 10:55, 1:35, 4:15, 6:55, 9:40
10 WISHING STAIRS 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 9:50

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2 MONA LISA SMILE 11:40, 2:10, 4:40, 7:10, 9:40
3 GOOD LAWYER'S WIFE 11:05, 12:55, 2:45, 4:35, 6:25, 8:15, 10:00
4 WISHING STAIRS 10:10, 12:25, 2:40, 4:55, 7:10, 9:40
5 MAGIC KITCHEN 10:35, 12:50, 3:05, 5:20, 7:35, 9:50
6 HAUNTED MANSION 10:40, 12:40, 2:40, 4:40, 6:40, 8:35, 10:00 DDS
7 CHASING LIBERTY 10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 9:50

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3 MILAN 10:10, 1:30, 4:20, 7:10, 10:00
4 CHASING LIBERTY 10:25, 12:50, 3:35, 6:20, 9:05
5 MAGIC KITCHEN 11:50, 2:10, 4:30, 6:50, 9:10
6 WISHING STAIRS 11:50, 2:10, 4:30, 6:50, 9:10
7 MILAN 12:35, 3:25, 6:15, 9:05 DTS
8 GOOD LAWYER'S WIFE 10:50, 12:50, 2:50, 4:50, 6:50, 9:00

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1 HAUNTED MANSION 11:00, 12:50, 2:45, 4:40, 6:35, 8:30
2 CHASING LIBERTY 11:20, 1:35, 3:50, 6:05, 8:30
3 THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE 11:35, 1:40, 3:45, 5:50, 8:20
4 MONA LISA SMILE 12:00, 2:25, 4:45, 7:10, 9:00
5 MILAN 10:10, 11:55, 2:40, 5:25, 8:15
6 GOOD LAWYER'S WIFE 11:35, 1:40, 3:45, 5:50, 8:10
7 WISHING STAIRS 11:35, 1:40, 3:45, 5:50, 8:20
8 MAGIC KITCHEN 11:20, 1:35, 3:50, 6:05, 8:30

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2 MILAN
3 CHASING LIBERTY
4 IN THE CUT

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3 CHASING LIBERTY
4 MAGIC KITCHEN

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1 HAUNTED MANSION
2 MILAN
3 CHASING LIBERTY
4 IN THE CUT
5 MILAN

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1 STUCK ON YOU
2 THE LAST SAMURAI
3 IN THE CUT
4 THE WISHER
5 MILAN

Big R Supercenter DASMARIÑAS
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1 MONA LISA SMILE
2 MILAN
3 MILAN
4 CHASING LIBERTY
5 THE HAUNTED MANSION

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San Fernando Pampanga
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1 MONA LISA SMILE
2 IN THE CUT
3 MILAN
4 MILAN
5 HAUNTED MANSION
6 STUCK ON YOU

IMUS
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1 HAUNTED MANSION
2 MAGIC KITCHEN
3 CHASING LIBERTY
4 DTS GOOD LAWYER'S WIFE
5 MILAN
6 WISHING STAIRS

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2 MILAN
3 STUCK ON YOU
4 SKY OF LOVE
5 THE TWINS EFFECT
6 THE LAST SAMURAI

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4 STUCK ON YOU
5 MEMENTO MORI
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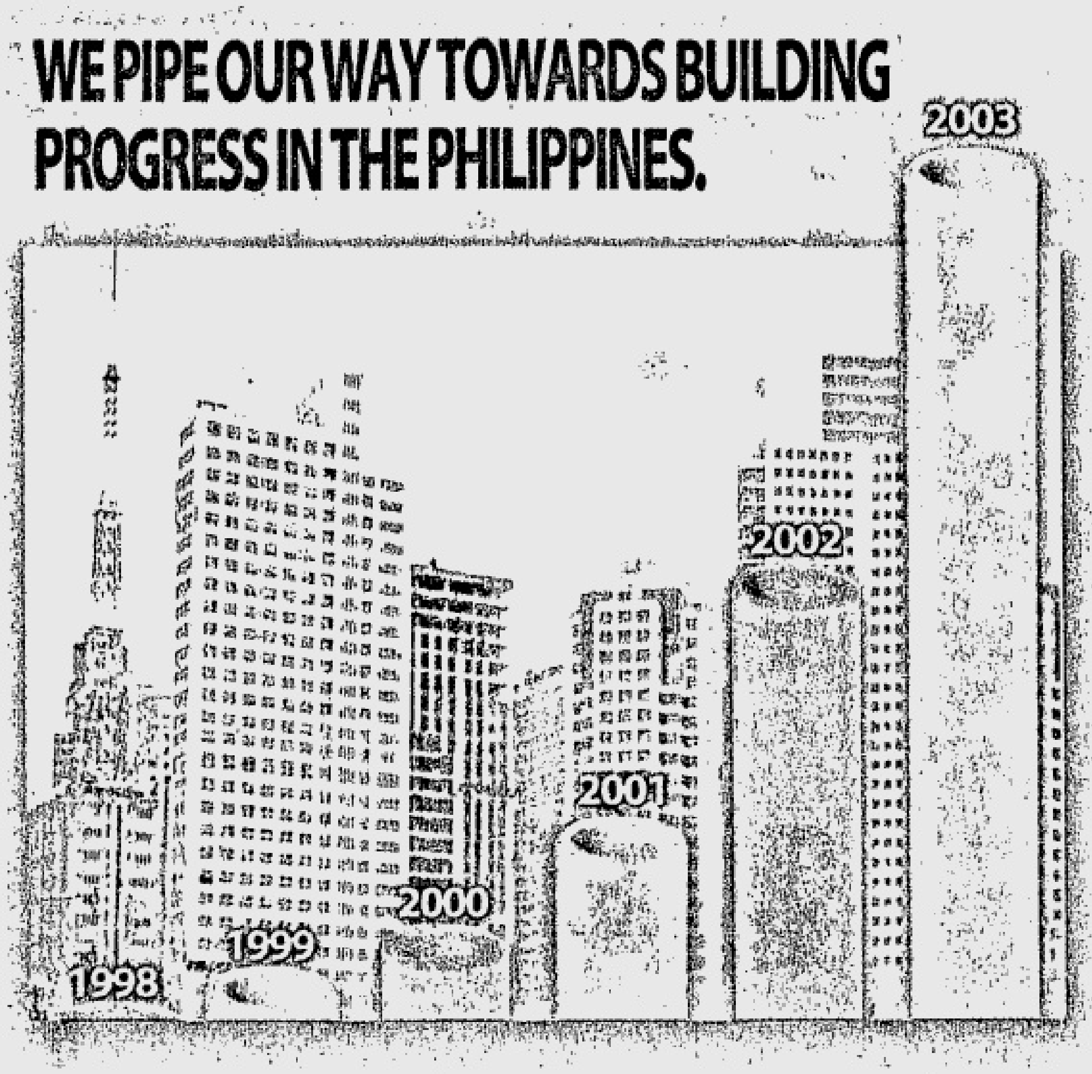

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RP, Thai officials begin oil talks

By Abigail L. Ho

THE STATE-RUN Philippine National Oil Co. and the Petroleum Authority of Thailand (PTT) will sign today an agreement to form a technical working group that will explore possible areas of cooperation.

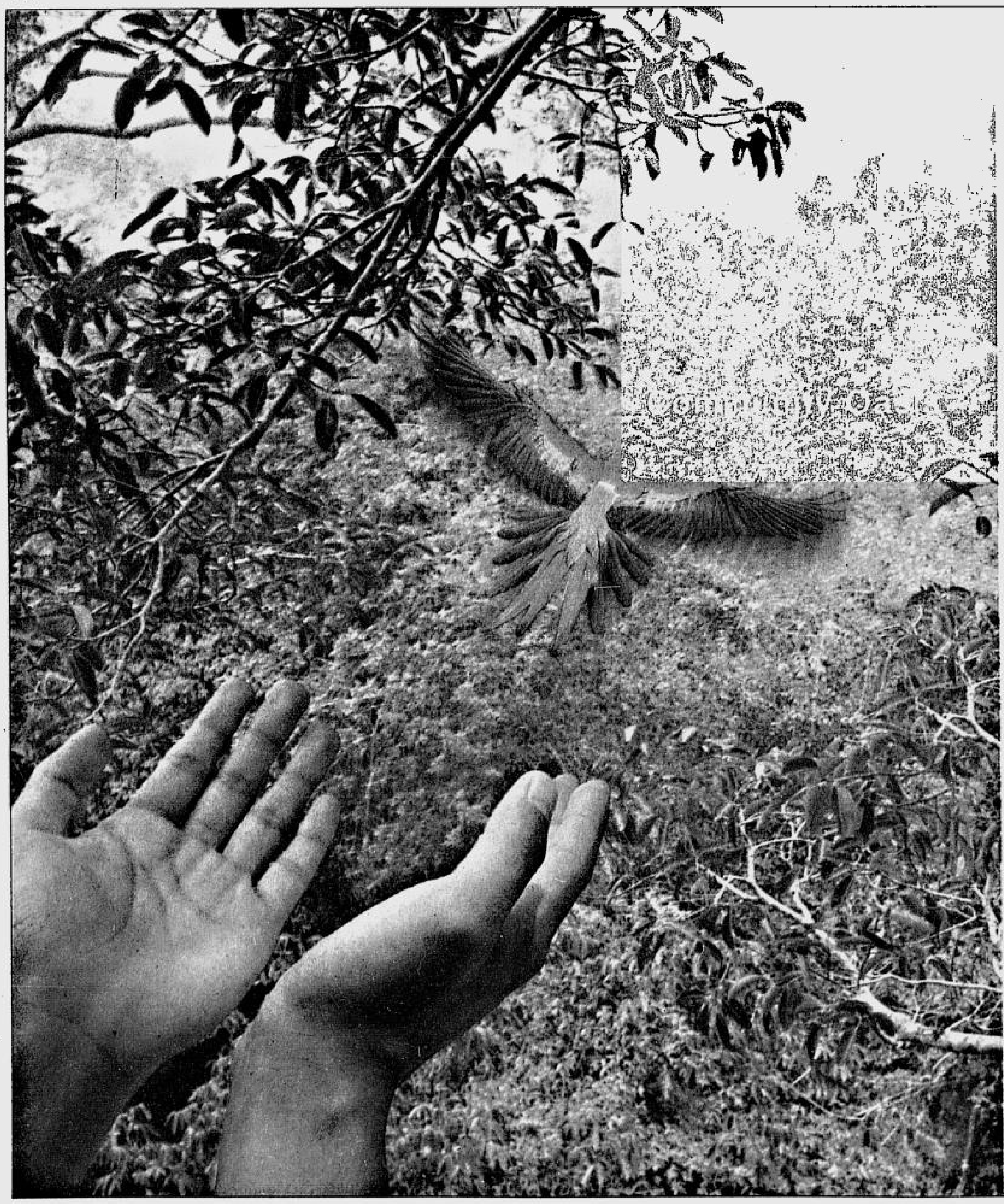
A 22-member delegation led by Thai energy minister Prommin Lertsuridej and senior officials of PTT are arriving today to meet with Vincent Perez Jr. and President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The Department of Energy said in a statement yesterday that talks will center on the use of existing oil storage facilities.

Perez and Prommin will go to the Subic Bay Freeport in Zambales tomorrow to visit the country's premier oil storage facility.

This oil terminal, which has a capacity of around 2.5 million barrels, is leased and operated by a joint venture between PTT and El Paso.

After visiting the oil terminal, they will hold bilateral talks in Manila, which will focus on investment opportunities in the oil and gas sectors. *With a report from AFP*



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Double-trouble baby care

The Philippines joins a growing number of countries holding Festival of Twins

By Linda Bolido

FOR PARENTS, it is tough enough to care for one newborn. So coping with twins or even more simultaneous births, is twice as difficult. Getting the right physician for children or pediatrician goes a long way in coping with the situation.

If you are parents of twins, or expect to be, you may want to get the services of either Dr. Arnel or Dr. Romeo Salud Nuguid—or both—for the children's medical needs. The brothers are not just qualified pediatricians. More importantly, they can empathize with you, knowing first-hand how tough it is to cope with a pair of newborns.

The Nuguids are twins and will be in the forefront of the first Festival of Twins in the Philippines on Feb. 21 at Clam Shell 2, Intramuros. Coinciding with the tourism promotion of the city of Manila, the whole-day affair will kick off an awareness campaign about twins and multiple births. It will feature a talk on "Raising Twins" by pediatrician and mother of twins, Dr. Rebecca Singson.

The festival is already an annual event in the United States, Canada, Mexico, United Kingdom, Australia, France and Singapore, among others. In these countries, it is not just a celebration but also an opportunity to identify kids with special characteristics that could advance studies in promoting the health and welfare of others like them.

The Nuguids understand that parents may worry even more than usual if they expect twins. Delivery complications occur more frequently in twin births, including premature (early) delivery and small birth weight. For instance, Mikhaela and Jaclyne Garcia Hammond, twin granddaughters of former movie producer and public relations consultant Natalie Palanca, the driving force behind the upcoming festival, were born after only 26 weeks. The girls weighed 1.9 and 1.2 pounds, respectively, and had to remain in the hospital for 100 days after birth.

The twin doctors said while a woman's obstetrician-gynecologist could provide useful advice, the expectant mother was the only one who could ensure she got enough rest and maintained proper nutrition for her twins.

Prepare the family

They also stressed that siblings must be prepared for the new arrivals, especially if some changes had to be made. Parents and other members of the family should also be ready to care for twins. Fatigue is the main cause of depression in new mothers, the doctors said. Fathers, friends or relatives can help in housekeeping.

The pediatricians said the infants should be fed individually to ensure maternal-infant touching and bonding. If the mother fed her babies simultaneously, she should hold them alternatively, keeping the other baby close. "The father of twins should be an active parent. He can change diapers, bottle-feed babies, bring the kids to mom, keep house and cook," the Nuguids said.

If one of the infants cries, the mother should try feeding, holding or putting him/her in a swinging chair. If all else failed, the Nuguids said the baby should just be left to cry to release energy.

Intelligence or IQ test results had shown no real differences between twins and single births, the Nuguids said. But they believed twins had advantages in developing outgoing, comfortable personalities.

Of course, twins also mean double the chances of mischief. "As they grow older, twins cooperate. What one does not think of, the other will. You cannot watch two children at the same time. We recommend completely child-proofing all open rooms. Lock the other rooms with child-proof knobs or latches," the Nuguids advised.

As with other siblings, fighting is to be expected, according to the doctors, and it can get bad. Their advice: "Do not take sides, just separate them. Remove the toy involved or allow each a certain amount of time to play with the toy. Children behave badly to get attention, for power and for revenge. Understand the reason. Biting is common, and you should immediately discipline the aggressor."

Different clothes for safety

They added that dissimilar clothes establish identity and allow identification for safety although it will not harm infants to wear identical clothes. Later, parents can let them wear different clothes or different colors of identical prints. Twins should be allowed to choose their own clothing and should have their stuff in separate drawers.

All toddlers are self-centered by nature, the Nuguids pointed out, so they recommended labeling each twin's possessions with his/her name. "Use a timer to alternate time for playing with a popular toy. Buy a toy with many pieces, such as building blocks, to allow sharing. Twins learn to share earlier than (other kids) and thus become good playmates with other children," they said.

Parents can feel even more tied down with twins than with single births. "We recommend hiring babysitters as early as you want. Infant bonding won't be harmed. It might be a good idea to hire an occasional babysitter just so mom can nap," they said.

The Nuguids said demand feeding, with the infants fed according to individual patterns, would be time-consuming and tiring. Their suggestion: "Modified demand—the first baby who is awake is fed and then the second baby is awakened for feeding—is reasonable. Simultaneous feeding of the babies is possible, if both are good feeders."

While breastfeeding of twins might seem daunting, the Nuguids recommend it. "Breastfeeding has many advantages: It provides optimal nutrition and infection-fighting factors; (milk) comes 'premixed in unbreakable' containers.'"

Mothers who want to breastfeed twins should:

1. Nurse babies in the hospital to develop milk supply.
2. Assign one baby to one breast as each produces its own milk.
3. Satisfy their own increased appetite by eating a balanced diet and drinking plenty of fluids.
4. Learn the positions where they are most comfortable.
5. Have plenty of rest between nursing.

"Festival of Twins" is supported by Pro-Life Philippines Foundation, Inc., City of Manila, Department of Social Welfare and Development, and Council for Welfare of Children. Call 4219641/0919-2030637; fax 4217147; e-mail life@pro-life.org.ph

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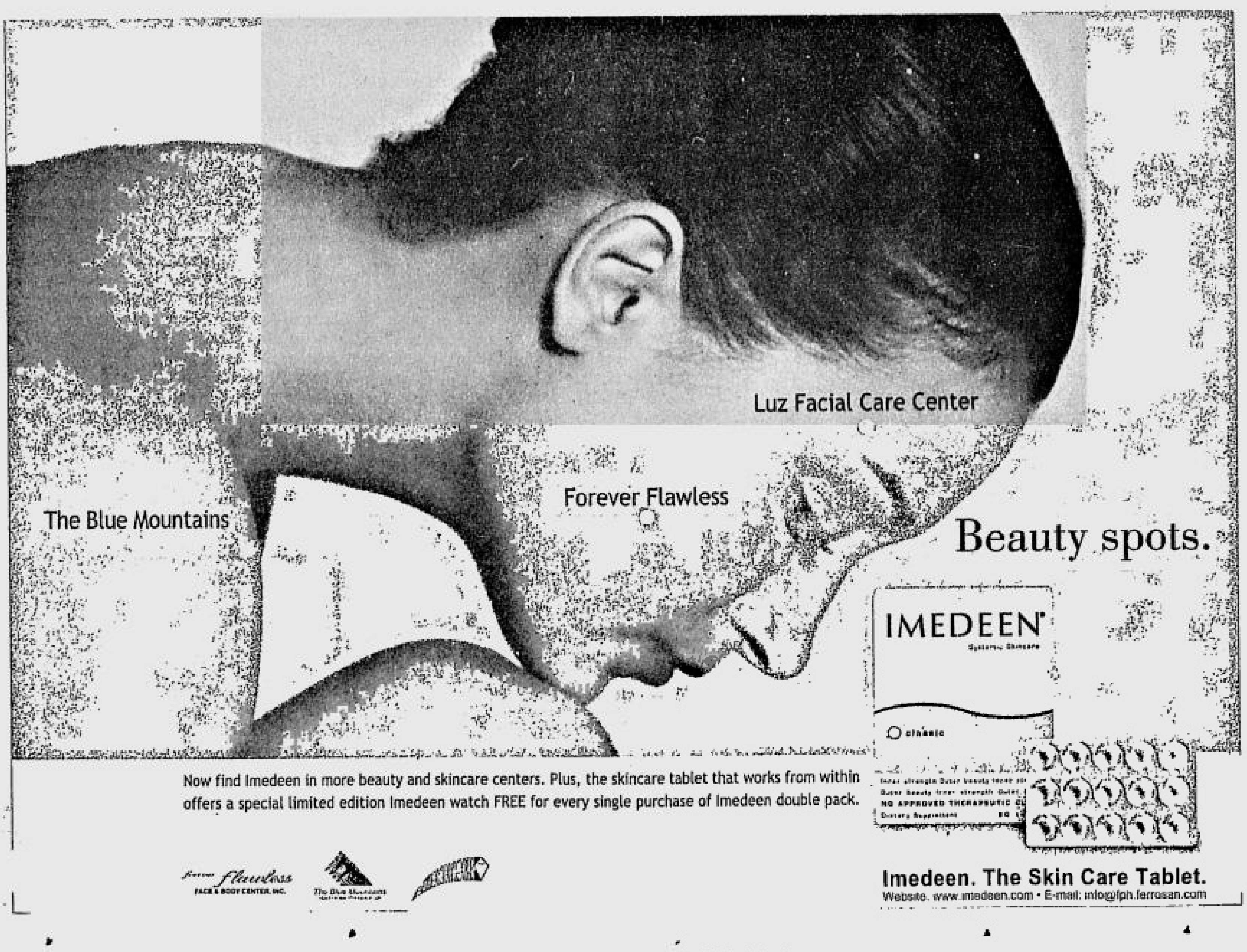

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PLANET Sports hotshots Arun Bhardwaj, general manager, and Anton Gonzalez, president

HIP LOOKERS. Jim Fuentebella, Mia Nolasco, architect Gil Coscolluela and Mavis Fuentebella

WATCH OUT, Morten Bremelhoej is on the prowl.

SEVRINE Miahle, Puma's main man Patxi Elizalde and Edouard Miahle

PUMA PALS. Top PR guy JR Isaac, Kit Silverio Zobel and Philippine Tatler editor in chief Anton San Diego

PARTYING trio. Cat Abad, Frank Araneta and Tina Vasquez-Prada

Big cat sports new look with matching attitude

INI-MINI-MYNI-MO, which one will it be for Jiggy Antonio and Arnold Martinez?

LET'S go French with Isabelle and Eric Legerger.

JOY Virata is one hot Puma mama in Bermuda Light in beige. On him: Retro 7cm track jacket and pants in navy blue with light blue contrast

REM Zamora in Puma T-shirt and jacket

YOUNG dudes Marken Aboitiz, Jaime Zobel and Samel Aboitiz

SOFIA Elizalde, Patsy Zobel and Sigalit Djemal with young Beatriz and Christina Elizalde and Natalie Peña

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by **Alex Van Hagen** on **Kodak Max**

PUMA, the German company that makes super comfy sportswear and sneakers, made a splash in Cosmo Manille sporting a sleek new look and tons of attitude to live up to its name of "ferocious feline," *palanggas*. The pouncing cat logo has become not only a serious athletic brand, but a lifestyle choice as well, for today's modern personas.

Puma CEO **Jochen Zeitz**, only 38 years old, is the genius credited with Puma's ultra reinvented look. In the Philippines, Puma was acquired by Planet Sports Inc. (PSI), "the largest operator of sports lifestyle retail concept shops in the country."

PSI heavyweights **Patxi Elizalde** and **Anton Gonzalez** opened the Puma Store on the ground floor of Glorietta 2, while the hip invitees swayed to the music mixed by **Manolet Dario** and nibbled on cocktail finger-food drowned with wine and what have you.

Instead of the overdone ribbon-snipping ceremony, a cord was made of colorful Puma baseball caps. Thank goodness.

Some namedroppables of the swinging set made their entrance in their hip Puma clothes and shoes. Eye-catching sisters-in-law **Sofia, Marilen** and **Melissa Elizalde,** and **Karen Santos** all came in their neat Puma shoes.

"With Puma's kind of savvy marketing, it is no surprise that Puma will go from strength to strength. [This] can only come from a unique personality and a rare creative competence," explained an enthusiastic Anton Gonzalez.

Talking about shoes, I know from experience that one way of forgetting some of my troubles is to wear shoes that are a size too small, *'di bala, palanggas*?

It was time for Mardi Gras, *palanggas*, and the Philippines' *bayanihan* spirit a week after the formal opening of the Puma shop when the brand's exclusive distributor again launched Puma's *tres* popular Harambee line via a swinging Jamaican-inspired bash at Greenbelt 3, the lifestyle mecca of Manille and scene of the hottest gatherings for fun events.

The party hub, transformed into a Harambee village and resembling a small town in Jamaica, had Puma groupies jamming with a band that played reggae music all night till you dropped, and many did literally drop. There were fire-eaters, flaming torches, a drum circle, plus a non-traditional fashion show, with professional models and stage actors showcasing the Puma collection in a theatrical presentation of love and courtship that ended in a wedding march.

All this captured the Jamaican spirit of fun, hip and humor, the very image the Puma brand projects, dahlings.

Soulstice in Manila

It was one of the hottest tickets of the week when the popular beehive of our town's hip set, Mati, and the shaker of all shakers, Big Fish, collaborated to bring Soulstice, the beautiful singer **Gina Rene** and talented DJ Mei-Iwun of Soundsystem from San Francisco, to Manila to perform live at Mati.

This is the second time Soulstice has come to perform in Cosmo Manille, and it was crystal clear, *palanggas*, from what we saw that night, that it definitely has a serious following in the city.

Booze flowed like forever and the real partying went on till sunrise at 5:30 a.m., would you believe? Soulstice played and sang to a full-packed house.

The whole setup was in front of Mati, on a stage beautifully lit with candles.

To namedrop a few of the tons of hot, trendy movers of today, there were handsome southern gent **Carlo Lopez,** sultry beauty **Oudine Santos,** talent manager **Joji Dingcong,** my favorite pepperoni **Pepper Teehankee,** gorgeous **Rosanna Escudero,** fun **Gutsy Tuason,** good-looking brothers **Francisco** and **Juan Miguel Delgado,** with their sister **Ines Delgado** of the popular Itsie-Bitsie and her love, nice **Chukri Prieto.**

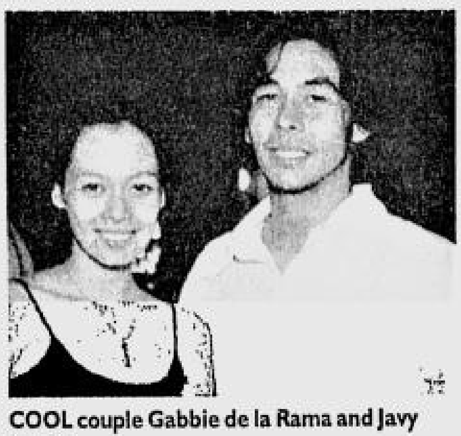
You couldn't miss the achievers who let it all hang out and had a blast. **RV Gonzalez; Brian Banta; Philip Adamson;** Dr. **Rick Fernandez;** *guapito* **Wendell Garcia;** stunningly gorgeous **Charlotte Teodoro Zulueta; Inaki Lamata; Kimmie Asad;** *el simpatico* **Miguel Villanueva** with woman of style **Macky Prieto Lovina; Illac Diaz;** young art connoisseur **Patrick Reyno; Nikos Gitsis** of the popular Seair; **RJ Ledesma; Tito Herbosa; Lilo Gutierrez;** the man who makes ladies swoon, **Marco Lobregat; Carlitos Ortoll; Mumph Ruiz; Matt Lim; Maite Matute; Pierre Toundjis;** Dish's big man **EJ Litton; Paolo Araneta; Javy Garcia; Ricardo Garcia;** tall man for all seasons **Mark Jentes; Nick** and **Richard Underwood; Elian Habayeb; Domini Primero;** super charmer, well-loved **Yorgos Psinakis; Samantha Brandon** and **Karla Tolentino,** were just a handful of the mob that celebrated Mati's going stronger than ever, *palanggas*. Thanks to the young miss with the know-how, smart eye-catching headturner, **Geni Lopez Psinakis,** no less. Yes, she's so cool.

What a blooper!

The caption for this photo in last Friday's column referred to Joel Uichico as "widow" and Bea Zobel Jr. as "widower." We apologize for the mistake.

POPULAR starmaker Joji Dingcong and model Matt Hadfield

BEAUTEOUS sisters Carmen and Lia Delgado



COOL couple Gabbie de la Rama and Javy Garcia

HEADTURNERS Ciara Sevilla and Kitty Kierulf

BRIAN Banta and lady of the hour Geni Psinakis

FRANCISCO Delgado and Ines Delgado

Dwarves in Iloilo school

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licau

ONE of the most fascinating things one encounters in the study of human consciousness and spirituality is the reality of coincidences. The great psychologist, Carl Jung, calls these mystifying events "synchronicity," defined as the "simultaneous and meaningful occurrence of two unrelated events."

I experienced another one last week. Several days before I flew to Iloilo to gather materials for a book on dwarves commissioned by Rex Publishing Co., the Iloilo newspaper The Guardian, issue of Jan. 17-18, reported sightings by children of dwarves in their school premises. The first incident occurred in Guimbal Elementary School and the second in Rizal Elementary School, Brgy. Rizal Estanzuela.

I decided to visit Rizal Elementary School because the encounter, as reported by the newspaper, involved important physical details I was looking for.

Newspaper report

The following are excerpts from the story by Francis Allan L. Angelo:

"The dwarf apparition occurred around 9:15 a.m. yesterday inside the grounds of the said school. Carol, one of the first students to see the dwarves, said the creatures wore yellow and blue clothes. Dwarves were no more than an inch in height. She also claimed talking to two of the creatures whose names were Wendy and Wenden. Carol said the dwarves were just trying to help them clean the school and wanted to befriend them.

"However, one of the students, a certain Ken, whipped one of the older dwarves with a coconut rib. The attack caused a wound on the thighs of the said dwarf. Suddenly, Ken fell to the ground and lost consciousness. He was revived by his teachers and was brought to a quack doctor for consultation. Carol said the dwarves retaliated on Ken for harming one of the creatures."

What really happened

Our subsequent investigation of the incident showed the newspaper report to be not entirely accurate. The following was what really happened, as gathered from first-hand witnesses we interviewed:

Grade 4 faculty adviser Hermie Orieno asked her students to clean the grounds. As the students cleaned around an acacia, some of them saw two dwarves in green and blue clothes near the trunk of the tree. Later, other students also saw dwarves in nearby shrubs.

The dwarves talked to the children and said their names were Wendy and Wendell. They asked the children not to hurt them because they didn't mean them harm. In fact, they helped the children clean the place.

As other children like Divine Grace Castillo, 9; Myrna Salaver, 9; Charmaine Clarin, 10; and Sandy approached, they also saw the dwarves. Sandy even gave them a biscuit, which the dwarves ate. The children saw the biscuit become smaller as the dwarves ate.

Then. came Kent Grey, 10, who couldn't see the dwarves. He was angry that the others could see them but he could not. In his frustration, he got a stick, asked the girls where the dwarves were. He started hitting the ground with the stick, accidentally hitting one of the dwarves, breaking his leg.

When the children saw what happened to the dwarf, they reported to Ms Orieno. She rushed out and also could not see the dwarf.

Then one of the girls said, "Do you see this leaf here that is moving while the rest of the leaves are not?" Ms Orieno said yes. "That's because one of the dwarves is right now hanging in there and moving it," the student said.

Kent, in the meantime, was brought by his parents to an *albulario* ("quack doctor" should not be used) to prevent him from being harmed by the dwarf. The *albulario* said Kent was out of danger. Kent told us he never became unconscious as reported by The Guardian. The teacher also confirmed nothing of the sort happened.

According to Ms Orieno, almost half of her class saw the dwarves. Some students in another section also did. The dwarves were described as wearing pointed hats and colorful clothes of blue, green and red. The children also saw a mother dwarf with a male child. She wore a red dress.

According to Sandy, who seemed to be the one who saw the creatures most clearly, there were at first only two dwarves. After Kent hit one of them and it fell to the ground, others came out of hiding and surrounded the victim. Their master, who had a long beard and wore black clothes, was very angry.

Ms Orieno, although she could not see anything, apologized to the dwarves for what happened and asked not to retaliate because Kent could not see them. Charmaine, who saw what happened, cried when she saw the other dwarves crying.

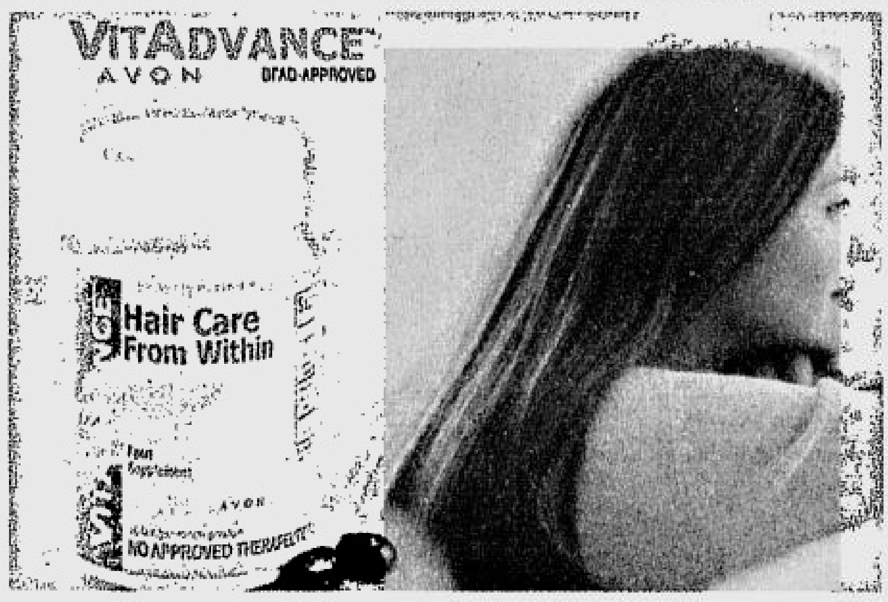
A secret

The dwarves told the girls not to tell others that they saw them. They didn't explain why. Other children we talked to, especially the boys, said they also saw angels coming down from the sky. They described the creatures as beautiful, with wings and very curly hair reaching down their shoulders. The angels were naked except for a piece of cloth covering their hips down. They said nothing to the children, who estimated their size to be 3 ft. I guess they saw fairies.

The existence of elementals or nature spirits, such as dwarves and fairies, cannot be denied just because most people cannot see them. Belief in such creatures is universal. They are called by different names in various parts of the world.

Of course, there will always be skeptics. The reporters, for example, asked a tricycle driver near the school, who said, "I've been staying here for a long time, but I have never seen a dwarf." This only proves to me that he cannot see dwarves or nature spirits. That does not mean the students could not see them, either.

Address letters to this column to 308 Prince Plaza I, 106 Legazpi St., Greenbelt, Makati City. Tel. nos.: 8107245/ 8926806 or e-mail jlicauco@edsamail.com.ph. Visit my website at http://j.licauco.tripod.com. Listen to my dzMM radio program every Sunday, 6-8 p.m.



NEW PRODUCT FOR HEALTHY HAIR, NAILS
Avon Vitadvance introduces Hair Care From Within, a nutrient-enhanced supplement to help maintain the health of hair and nails. It contains, among others, Vitamin Pantothenic Acid and millet extracts to help improve hair texture, and help keep hair from becoming dry and brittle. Avon Vitadvance Hair Care From Within is available from all Avon Ladies. Visit the website www.avon.com.

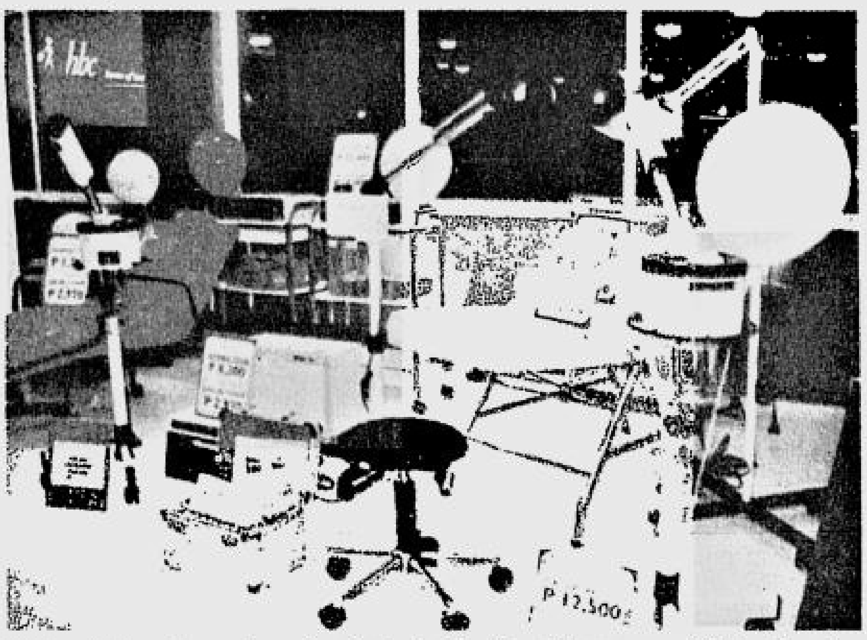
Beauty tools showroom opens

HBC Home of Beauty Exclusives has opened its first Exclusive Pro Salon Tools and Equipment showroom on the second floor of HBC Hidalgo Branch in Quiapo, Manila.

Chief operating officer Susan Loyola and HBC customer care operations manager Glen Bolado welcomed guests.

Exclusive Pro offers a Salon Starter Package for entrepreneurs who want to start their own business. Product demos and training of staff for free are given upon purchase of selected Exclusive Pro salon tools and equipment or starter package.

Exclusive Pro branches will soon open on Quezon Avenue, QC; and in Urdaneta, Pangasinan; Plaridel, Bulacan; and Balibago, Sta. Rosa, Laguna.



THE well-lit, modern and spacious Exclusive Pro Salon Showroom on Hidalgo Street, Quiapo

Hospital gets prestigious international accreditation

ST. LUKE'S Medical Center (SLMC) has been granted a three-year accreditation by the prestigious Joint Commission International (JCI), worldwide leader in improving the quality of healthcare.

SLMC is the first and only JCI accredited hospital in the Philippines and the second in Asia.

Karen Timmons, JCI chief executive officer, said accreditation met the public's demand for quality service and stimulated continuous, systematic improvements in performance and patient care.

JCI is a subsidiary of the prestigious Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), the oldest and largest healthcare accrediting body in the United States. JCAHO has developed standards for high-quality care and patient safety and uses them to assess the performance of healthcare organizations.

So far, JCI has accredited over 40 hospitals in 13 different countries worldwide, while JCAHO has accredited thousands of hospitals in the United States and Canada.

With JCI accreditation, SLMC will continue to improve performance and patient care.

The JCI survey team provided advice on how the hospital could continue to improve performance.

Prior to the JCI accreditation, SLMC became an affiliate of the New York-Presbyterian Hospital and the medical schools of Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Weill Cornell Medical College of Cornell University. It was the first international affiliate of the New York-Presbyterian Hospital and the first New York Presbyterian healthcare system member accorded the honor of being affiliated with the two Ivy League medical schools.

SLMC, headed by Jose F.G. Ledesma, president and chief executive officer, is better equipped than 95 percent of hospitals in the United States.

Dentists hold convention

REGISTRATION for the 96th Annual Convention and Scientific Meeting of the Philippine Dental Association (PDA) is ongoing until Feb. 29.

PDA president-elect and convention chair Dr. Walfrido P. Cruz and deputy chair Dr. Enrico L. Dolatre said those who registered on or before this date would pay the discounted rate of P1,300 each. Full registration fee is P1,500 per delegate.

The convention, to be held May 1-6 at the Philippine International Convention Center, will have for its theme "Membership, Empowerment for a Stronger PDA."

Personal checks will only be accepted until Feb. 28. Payments may also be made through deposits at Equitable PCIBank, Heroes Hill, Quezon Avenue, QC account number 1375-09785-7) or by credit card (Visa or Mastercard).

The PDA registration secretariat is at the Philippine Congress Organizing Center, 2/F Physicians Tower, 533 United Nations Ave., Ermita, Manila. Call 5214884, 5220541 to 48; fax 5221090; e-mail pcoc@manila-online.net.

The PDA secretariat is at Ayala Avenue corner Kamagong Street, Makati City. Call 8996332 or 8904609; e-mail phildentas@pda.org.ph; visit www.pda.org.ph.

Skin clinic promos

CLARITY Aesthetic and Laser Center is offering promos for women, men and couples this month.

Groups of women may want to avail of the Diamond Peel promo. For every four sessions, they get one free. Couples can get a free facial treatment for him by availing of the one Intense Pulsed Light (IPL) Treatment.

Also available are gift certificates for Diamond Peel, facial treatments and IPL. The Diamond Peel procedure removes dead skin cells and scars using a diamond-tipped wand. IPL eliminates fine wrinkles, sun and age spots, freckles, large pores, facial redness and veins using light pulses at an intense wavelength.

Clarity belongs to the Healthway group of medical clinics. Visit Clarity Aesthetic and Laser Center at the 5/L Shangri-La Plaza and at the G/F SM North Edsa Annex Building.

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From the frying pan to the fire?

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Juan

ON MARCH 1, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will impose a nationwide ban on the over-the-counter sale of ephedrine diet pills.

Although the FDA had received 16,000 complaints and reports of 155 deaths over the past 10 years, it was the untimely death early l ast year of 23-year-old Baltimore Orioles baseball pitcher Steve Bechler (his widow has filed a $600-million lawsuit against the makers of Xenadrine RFA-1) that brought matters to a head.

Knowing that the axe would soon fall following Bechler's death, weight-loss supplement makers have been busy coming up with "ephedra-free" diet pills, which promise weight loss without the adverse effects of ephedrine.

The question is: Are these substitutes any safer? The answer is no one knows. Just as there was no extensive pre-market testing of supplements containing ephedrine, which is derived from ephedra or *ma huang*, there is also not much research on the safety of ephedra-free weight-loss formulations.

This is because of a 1994 law that allows herbal and food supplements to be sold below the "radar" of the FDA. According to the law, nutritional supplements are defined as food and do not need to undergo the same stringent process as drugs, which can take years of research and testing.

Dietary supplements can be sold based on anecdotes and testimonials instead of hard scientific evidence. It is up to the FDA to prove that a supplement is dangerous to the health of consumers. For that, people have to get hurt or die first.

This worries people like Dr. Ray Woolsey, vice president for health sciences at the University of Arizona, who told John Carey of Business World Online, "It is very likely that the substitutes for ephedra are going to be just as toxic." Another medical professional, pharmaceutical sciences professor Bill Gurley of the University of Arkansas, told Carey there were already reports of adverse reactions to the new ephedra-free products.

The ephedra substitute that health experts are concerned with the most is synephrine. As a drug, it is used in nasal sprays to unclog stuffy noses. It is effective at doing this because it constricts blood vessels. But, because of that characteristic, the FDA requires a warning label that states in part, "Do not use this product for more than three days and use only as directed. Side effects: general stimulation causing increased heart rate and blood pressure, insomnia, nervousness, anxiety, tremor, dry mouth, blurry vision and headache. It may also cause an inability to urinate. Therefore, consult a physician if you have any history of cardiac disease, high blood pressure, anxiety, or urinary problems. Also, combining decongestants with other over-the-counter or prescribed medicines with similar side effects may lead to dangerous complications."

That's a long list of possible side effects simply from using a nasal spray with synephrine. Yet, you won't see the same warning on a weight-loss product, which probably contains more synephrine than you can spray up your nostrils.

The FDA does not approve of the use of synephrine for the purpose of weight loss. To circumvent the FDA's authority, supplement manufacturers extract synephrine from a fruit called "bitter orange" (its peel is used in small amounts to make orange marmalade) so that their product can be classified as "dietary supplement" rather than drug.

In Chinese medicine, bitter orange has been safely used for hundreds of years to make an herbal concoction called *zhi shi*, a digestive aid for upset stomach. So there should be no problem using bitter orange or synephrine in a weight-loss pill, right? Wrong.

Dosage makes the difference

There is a big difference between an experienced herbalist's use of the fruit, flower, leaf or root of an herb and the extraction of active ingredient for use in much larger doses in pill or capsule form.

Consider this: Chinese herbalists use *ma huang*, which contains ephedrine to alleviate asthma. *Ma huang* has a good safety record when used for this purpose and in this manner. The adverse side effects were registered when the ephedrine in *ma huang* was used in concentrated form in diet pills.

Synephrine is chemically similar to ephedrine though not as potent. However, since it also constricts blood vessels and raises the heart rate, the concern is that in large doses, it may produce side effects similar to those of ephedrine namely irregular heartbeats, anxiety, high blood pressure, heart attack and stroke.

A fact sheet on bitter orange from the Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database states that "the small amounts found in food have not been shown to be harmful, but larger amounts found in over-the-counter herbal supplements can be harmful." The fact sheet further warns, "The ingestion of large amounts of bitter orange peel in children can cause intestinal colic, convulsions and even death."

The other concern is that, just like ephedrine, the effects of synephrine are heightened or exaggerated when combined with another stimulant like caffeine. Manufacturers almost always package synephrine with caffeine because although synephrine has the same appetite-suppressing qualities as ephedrine, it lacks the energizing "kick" that ephedrine was famous for. To give their product an extra "zing," the addition of large amounts of caffeine is almost mandatory.

Consumer Reports, a nonprofit organization that does independent reviews and analysis of supplements, sent a team of reporters to 90 stores and checked the Internet to analyze ephedra-free weight-loss pills. They found that many products contained as much caffeine as six cups of strong coffee.

Dr. Adriane Fugh-Berman of Georgetown University raised another concern. She told Lauran Neergaard of the Associated Press that bitter orange contained a natural chemical, just like grapefruit, that might allow over-the-counter or prescription medication that a dieter might already be taking to build up to dangerous levels.

In 1999, alternative medicine expert Dr. Andrew Weil of the University of Arizona wrote in his website about the possible dangers of using bitter orange as a weight-loss supplement. "Results of one study that looked at the weight loss effects of bitter orange should serve as a cautionary tale. A group of Italian researchers published results showing that as the dose of bitter orange was increased, lab rats ate less and did lose weight but also developed heart abnormalities and died. The researchers speculated that the deaths were due to the stimulant action of the synephrine. These scientists cautioned that bitter orange may pose a danger, especially when used by the elderly, the obese and those with heart problems."

Other names

It is possible to buy a weight-loss product or "fat burner" that contains synephrine and/or caffeine and yet not see those ingredients listed on the label. That's because manufacturers may use other names or list only the herbs from which active ingredients were extracted. This can be deceiving. The average consumer may not know that what s/he is buying contains these things.

Synephrine may be listed as bitter orange, sour orange, green orange, Seville orange, neroli oil, *zhi shi* or *Citrus aurantium*.

Caffeine, meanwhile, can be hiding under the names guarana, kola nut, green tea, mate and *Paullina cupana*.

Until the DSHEA or Dietary Supplement Health Education Act of 1994 is changed, the FDA will be at a loss to stop the market from being flooded with weight-loss products containing ingredients that are not fully tested for safety or effectiveness. It is truly a "buyer beware" market.

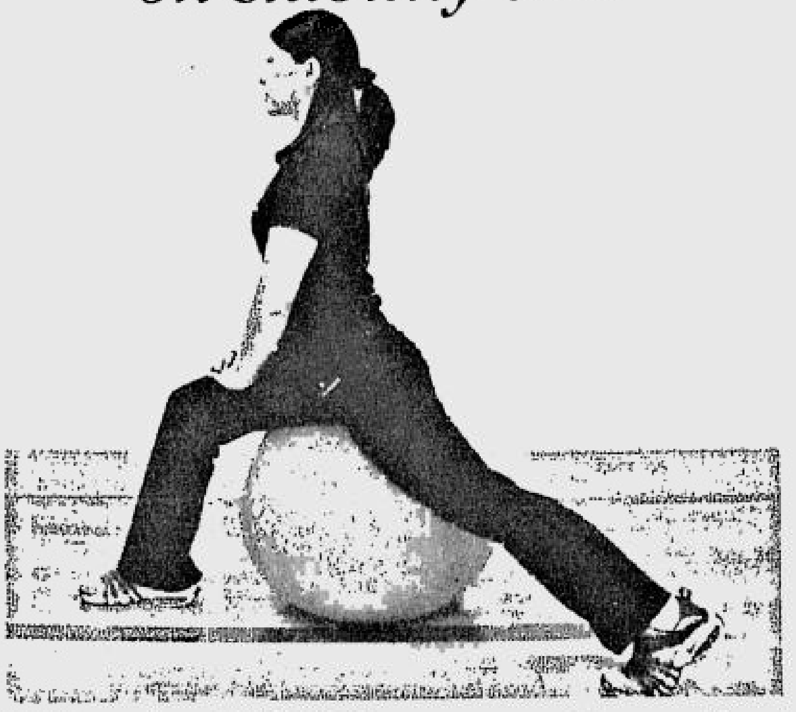
To protect yourself, perhaps it is best to follow the advice of Jamie Kopf, editorial associate at Consumer Reports, who told The Detroit Free Press, "Our baseline advice is to avoid all weight-loss products. It's a complete jungle out there. It's highly unregulated. There are all kinds of pseudonyms and products that sound safe, but, like ephedra, they have the same dangers. And there's little data showing these things work. Why take the gamble?"

The Association of Fitness Professionals of the Phils. will hold a one-day fitness seminar on Feb. 21 at the UP Diliman, QC. Topics include "Conditioning for Badminton," "Fad Diets Unveiled," "Yoga for Beginners" and "Sports Conditioning Drills." Call 8136077 or text 0917-5181202.

Visit www.tinajuanfitness.info

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Supported lunge stretch on stability ball



THIS exercise stretches muscles in front of the hips and thighs of the extended leg. It also strengthens the thigh and buttocks muscles of the supporting leg in front.

Equipment:

Stability ball. As a substitute, use a low stool.

Exercise technique:

1. Start by sitting at the edge of the stability ball with knees bent, legs wide apart and feet facing outward.

2. Turn carefully to one side and straighten the back leg.

3. Hold the stretch for the desired length of time, then repeat on the other side.

Performance tips:

1. To increase the stretch in front of the hips, contract your buttocks and gently push your hips forward.

2. Continue to breathe as you hold the stretch.

Repetitions:

Hold the stretch for 10-30 seconds. Do once or twice on each side.

Take Charge Doc!

Nicky S. Montoya, M.D.

MEDICard

Looking to learn more about your benefits under your MEDICard coverage? Do you want to be clear on the procedures, which allow you to avail of MEDICard's services? Get your information straight from MEDICard's Medical Director, DR. NICKY S. MONTOYA.

FAQs (frequently asked questions)

I've heard news of a MEDICard clinic in Filinvest Supermall, Alabang. Can we avail medical services there and what services are offered?

In line with our continuing promise of providing MEDICard members quality healthcare that guarantees both convenience and ease of access, we have opened our 2nd "mall-based satellite clinic" at the Festival Supermall in Filinvest, Alabang. The clinic, located at the 3rd Level near the Corporate Avenue entrance, is open from Mondays to Sundays, 8 AM to 8 PM. Medical services offered include annual physical and pre-employment exams, multi-specialty consultations, laboratory and x-ray services. Members who may require more comprehensive medical services will be referred to the nearest accredited hospital.

Meet your MEDICard Team

More than 37 years of clinical experience makes **Dr. Martin J. Dela Rosa**, one of the most respected accredited doctors of MEDICard. Dr. Dela Rosa, who has been with the HMO since 1999 is a UP Medicine batch 1967 graduate. He finished his residency for his specialization in Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Phil. General Hospital and is currently affiliated with the Phil. Obstetrics and Gynecology Society and the Phil. College of Surgeons. He also holds a Masters degree in Public Health from the John Hopkins University. For consultations, visit his clinic at Room 203 of the Dr. Victor Potenciano Medical Center at EDSA, Mandaluyong City. He holds clinic from Mondays to Fridays, except Wednesdays from 3 to 7 PM and during Saturdays, from 9 AM until 1 in the afternoon.

Contract Signing

SCG PHILIPPINES, INC. (ON SEMICONDUCTOR) recently chose MEDICard as the healthcare provider for its employees and their dependants. (L-R) SCG's Chuck Rojo (Planning Materials Mngr.), Alfie Suarez (HR-OD Mngr.) and S.K. Chew (Pres. & General Mngr.) with MEDICard's Dr. Nicanor Montoya (Pres.), Voltaire Victoria (Mktg. & Sales Mngr.) and Lulu Dadia (Corporate Accounts Mngr.)

We encourage all MEDICard members to voice out their concerns and issues at hand. BE HEARD AND BE READ. You can write DR. NICKY S. MONTOYA at 9/F Sagittarius Bldg. H.V. De la Costa St., Salcedo Village, Makati City or e-mail him at inquiry@medicardphils.com. For feedback on availment of our services, e-mail us at feedback@medicardphils.com.

For inquiries on individual or family membership, dial 818-2161. For group or corporate membership, dial 812-8360, 817-5136 or 817-4985 and look for a membership consultant. For Cebu Sales Office call (032) 253-5031; For Davao Sales Office call (082) 224-6931/305-3386.

TEXT MEDICARD: Key in MEDICARD and send to 2344 (Globe & Touch Mobile) or 4627 (Smart & Talk N' Text).
VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.medicardphils.com.

MEDICard is the first HMO in the Philippines and the whole Asia Pacific Region to be ISO CERTIFIED

Real women, real stories

INSIDE OUT

Cory Quirino

WOMEN have often been regarded as the best storytellers. Perhaps it is because of their innate ability to record, remember and recall life's many challenges, triumphs and struggles.

With their natural gift for weaving all this into their personal tapestry of experiences, they have many stories to tell in their separate journeys toward womanhood.

Dove, believing in the power of a woman's femininity, launched a nationwide search for real women with real stories to tell. Out of 4,000 entries, 10 finalists were chosen. The search, launched in September 2003, will reach its climactic end in March with only two being selected as Dove's new discoveries.

For now, 10 women with heartwarming stories are Dove's finalists. And what do they have to share with millions of Filipino women? The truth that all women search for in a lifetime, a sense of belonging and fulfillment by being true to one's self. The truth that answers the questions "Who am I?" "Why am I?"

Celebrating womanhood

In a morning session at Richmonde Hotel, the finalists were treated to a Dove Moment—a total body, mind and spirit experience. After celebrating womanhood with them, I felt we were connected through their joys and pains, triumphs and failures, dreams and passions. I was one with their essence, as all women should be.

Pam Sio is a teacher who considers it her mission to teach children.

Malu Nuñez exchanged a high-flying career for the role of full-time mom.

Shirly Joy Cuyugan sees devotion to her only child her life's work.

Avegail Alapide uses her past experience in the convent as the foundation for her spiritual life.

Christine Garcia firmly believes in beauty that is rooted in inner peace.

Wen Raymundo calls herself a homemaker, wife and mother.

Vanessa Teves is happily single and a lover of nature.

Jenny Ortega-Manguiata is a teacher and her best friend is her mother.

Saudin Dungog staunchly believes in the blessings of a closely-knit family.

Anne Feo-Maningo, a young widow who has since remarried, manifests her love of life in her positive outlook.

A feminist man

A one-on-one over lunch with Dove senior brand manager Alex Tacderas was a revelation. Here is a man who not only promotes the benefits of Dove to the skin but also espouses women empowerment.

"The search," he says, "is for genuine, down-to-earth women whose personal stories are meant to touch millions of Filipinos." He stresses that Dove is a cream bar that promises restoration.

And restoration comes in many levels—first, the woman's skin to give it a dewy moisture; second, the woman's heart to reaffirm its devotion to a loving nature; and third, the woman's spirit to liberate it and bring it to its most feminine heights.

Thank you, Dove, for believing in women, for believing in us. And in return, we believe more firmly in you.

THE DOVE discovery finalists: (clockwise from left) Christine Garcia, Saudin Dungog, Anne Maningo, Malu Nunez, Shirly Cuyugan, Wen Raymundo, Pam Sio, Jenny Manguiata, Vanessa Teves and Avegail Alapide